Falling Out of Romantic Love
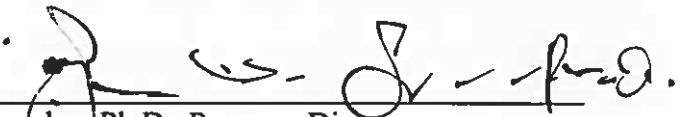

Cherie Okada

A Clinical Research Project presented to the faculty of the Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology.
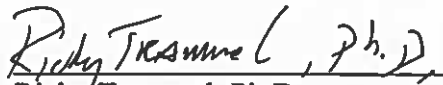

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This Clinical Research Project by Cherie Okada, directed and approved by the candidate's
Clinical Research Project Committee, was approved by the faculty of the Hawai'i School of
Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the degree of Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology.

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Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu – 2019

Much theoretical and empirical theories have focused solely on the purpose of love, and the experiencing the dissolution of a relationship. If it is so significant and there is much purpose in being in love (allowing great happiness), and dissolution brings extreme emotional and possible physical turmoil, then it may be important to explore how and why do people fall out of love? The present research used a transcendental phenomenological design to examine and discover the experience of falling out of romantic love from the perspective of unmarried American males, who were born and raised in Hawai'i. The study revolved around men's experience of falling in and out of the phenomenon of romantic love (which was provisionally defined) with a significant other, and what that meant for him in terms of his own personal experience of being in love. The experience described by the participants had a clear beginning and end, with an unexplainable shift in their emotions sometime in the middle of their relationship. Analysis of interview data uncovered themes surrounding the importance of connection, a felt sense of emptiness, and self-compassion. Other cultural components were also discussed. The results of the study suggest that these distinctive elements of men falling out of love warrant further research.

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible if it was not for my remarkable advisor and committee chair, Dr. Joy Tanji. This journey is by far one of the most surreal achievements I will keep close to my heart. Your constant guidance, support, kind-hearted demeanor, and nurturing attitude was indefinitely the most invaluable gifts I received through this adventure. I will forever remember all the time and resources you sacrificed to be there for me to make this project happen.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Love may quite possibly be one of the most universal experiences felt amongst many social species. Within the history of mankind, every society has a romantic tradition and the desire to form some long and lasting relationships with other humans. This craving seems to be an apparently intrinsic part of being human. However, while monogamy seems to be the ideal sought by most, attaining that ideal is easier said than done. Some form everlasting, deep, relationships throughout the lifespan, while others fall in and out of love numerous times throughout their lives. Like it or not, humans do not seem to stay with one romantic partner for their entire lives, especially as lifespans increase. So why is it that even when people find the love they seek, they fall out of this so desired experience? Though we recognize love is fragile, it is quite difficult to understand why a romantic relationship comes to an end. This study looks at understanding what may happen or go on when one experiences falling out of romantic love.

Situating the Study

In qualitative inquiries, it is acknowledged that each study begins and ends with the researcher. Despite a researcher's best efforts to minimize his or her own filters, the researcher cannot remove all traces of his or her lens. Thus, it is important to begin a study by examining the primary instrument of the study—the researcher (Glesne, 2016). Situating a study involves examining the relationship of the study to the researcher's personal experiences and knowledge bases (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It essentially is an articulation of the researcher's bias with respect to why a study was important to do, how the identification of what is meaningful to study is linked to the researcher's own personal life experiences.

This is important to consider because it provides the researcher with an opportunity to examine how the study is conditioned at its outset by her choice of what to study. In qualitative inquiry, this selection also constitutes an issue of moral praxis because in selecting the parameters of a study, the researcher eliminates others (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Situating a study requires the researcher to ask what in his or her life experiences has made this an important study to do, how one's experiences shapes the viewfinder through which the researcher bounds the study, and how the researcher may impact the phenomenon being studied with his or her presence and assumptions.

My interest in learning and understanding more about the phenomenon of falling out of romantic love with one's significant other is a direct result of my own personal experiences and those of friends and colleagues who are experiencing such a phenomenon with their own significant other. While helping a friend whose significant other had fallen out of love with her, I had difficulty explaining how this phenomenon may happen. My desire to provide an understanding for others who are experiencing this phenomenon or are directly affected by one who has fallen out of love with him or her led me to be interested in this study.

Review of Literature

A literature review discusses published information on a particular topic or subject area within a certain time period. While sometimes it is a summary of the most significant pieces of information on a topic, it may also be a synthesis or reorganization of that information, that offers new interpretations or combines new with old interpretations (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Literature reviews may trace the intellectual progression of a topic in a certain field, including its transformation and any major debates that have arisen (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). They also may highlight features of a topic or include the evaluation of certain sources.

Generally, literature reviews are a convenient guide to what is known about a specific topic. They offer both the researcher and her audience a summary of the extant knowledge and can inform professionals as to where the research on a particular phenomenon is going. This can provide a firm background for future investigations. In addition, a thorough review of the extant literature can point to what is missing from the literature. By doing so, the review of literature can aid in identifying ways in which a study can contribute new insights (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Because the discovery of new knowledge is a continuous and progressive process, the literature reviews associated with a qualitative study are likewise emergent (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Some qualitative researchers argue the literature should not be extensively reviewed at the proposal stage; they believe that the extant literature articulates a particular perspective so may bias the inquiry. Others posit that a literature review helps to frame and build a case for a study so should be thorough in order to help the researcher push past and uncover aspects of the participant's experience of the phenomenon that is not represented in the literature (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). A thorough literature review also supports theoretical sensitivity, knowing what is meaningful to ask while "enter[ing] the research setting with as few predetermined ideas as possible" (Glaser, 1978, p. 2).

Love

Romantic love has consistently been viewed as equally stunning and intoxicating, distressing and overwhelmingly devastating. The "madness" one faces when in love is often clearer from the outside than for the one experiencing it. Most of us can remember a time when we questioned a friend's judgment in choosing a partner or felt annoyed with their giddy euphoria. Why do humans elect to put themselves through this chaos? Some people believe that

romantic love makes our lives meaningful. Quite possibly, it is an escape from our innate solitude or misery. Maybe it is a disguise for our sexual desire, which are conceivably a hoax of biology to make us reproduce. Is romantic love all we need in life to be satisfied and fulfilled? Do we require romantic love at all? It is very difficult to explain its functionality. Poets, musicians, and novelists search for the perfect way to describe it. If romantic love has a function, neither psychology nor science has fully exposed the solution to these queries yet.

Theories of Love

A typology of love. So what is love? Sternberg's (1988) Triangular Theory of Love posits that love is composed of three constituents: intimacy, passion, and commitment. *Intimacy* refers to a state of feeling close, connected, and bonded to another in a loving relationship. *Passion* involves the drives that lead to physical attraction, romance, and sexual experiences and is accompanied by physiological changes in arousal. The last component, *commitment*, involves the decision to love someone and dedicate oneself to long-term love.

Sternberg posits that these components, in various combinations, explain the different types of human love. He identifies seven different types, including lust/infatuation, liking, empty love (that contain only one of the components); *companionate love*, typically shared by friends and family, in which there are high levels of intimacy and commitment but a low level of passion; *fatuous love,* that includes high levels of commitment and passion but low levels of intimacy; and *romantic love*, characterized by high levels of intimacy and passion, but a low level of commitment. Romantic love is typically shared by partners who are deeply attracted to each other. If all components of love of present in equal proportions, Sternberg says that we have achieved consummate love. *Consummate love* is typically shared with one's lifelong partner.

Why do we love? Philosophers have offered some intriguing theories about love's contribution to our lives. Plato (as cited in Hooper, 2013) asserted that love makes us whole again. His assertion was based on Greek mythology that depicted the original humans as creatures with four arms, four legs, and two faces. According to Greek legends, Zeus became increasingly wary of the power of these early humans so sliced them all in two. Plato posited that since that time, people have been seeking his or her other half. When these missing halves come together, they throw their arms about each other, intertwine themselves in mutual embrace, and long to grow into one. Love, according to Plato, is this longing to find a soul mate in order to feel whole again.

Nobel-Peace winning British philosopher, Bertrand Russell (1925) similarly believed that love is an abscond from or palliative for our loneliness. He posited that our fears of the harsh realities of life entice us to armor and detach ourselves from the rest of the world. While such actions may be protective, they isolate us from a valuable resources—the comfort of others. Love's warmth and delight helps us to overcome our distress of the world, to escape our lonely casing, and the opportunity to enrich our experiences (Russell, 1925).

Aron, Paris, and Aron's (1995) self-expansion model of love advanced the idea that individuals enter romantic love relationships with the intention of expanding their horizons through the incorporation of aspects of their loved ones' selves into their own selves. There are two key principles to this model. The first is that humans have the internal motivation to expand (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995). The second is that individuals expand through close relationships that allow another's strengths to be part of their own self (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995). In fact, research supports this notion that falling in love can allow for a greater change in diversity of self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995).

Arthur Schopenhauer (as cited in Wicks, 2011) offers a less romantic view of love. He posits that what we call *love* is really more like an evolutionary development that supports human survival. He posits that love essentially tricks us into having babies. According to Schopenhauer, the notion that humans love because they believe it will make them happy is a deception. He argues that we are socialized to believe that we procreate because of a force within ourselves as people, but the loving union humans pursue actually serves an inherent drive to maintain us as a species (Wicks, 2011).

The neurobiology of love. It turns out neurobiologists and neuropsychologists have relatively much to say about this great mystery of life. Scientists have been examining the biological keystones of romantic love as they search for a way to understand how it can drive people to behave in such wild ways.

Falling in love can be described as one of the most overwhelming affective states, requiring the individual to navigate through emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and erotic aspects of their experience. From a neurobiological perspective, the function of romantic love is not only to generate offspring but to promote a steady emotional atmosphere and to ascend pleasing, benign feelings of happiness and sex arousal (Zeki, 2007). The passion of love generates feelings of exhilaration and euphoria that are frequently indefinable. Thus, it is not surprising that the areas involved in romantic love include the cortex, medulla insula, anterior cingulate, and hippocampus in addition to areas of the subcortex that are engaged with the striatum and nucleus accumbens (Zeki, 2007). These areas together are the principal regions of the reward system that has been found to be especially triggered and activated in response to romantic moods (Zeki, 2007). These same areas are "largely coextensive" with those brain regions that

contain elevated concentrations of neuromodulators associated with desire, reward, addiction, and euphoric states.

Recent reviews of the extant literature further suggest that stressors can trigger a search for pleasure, proximity, and closeness (Esch & Stefano, 2005; Stein & Vythilingum, 2009; Talarci, 2012). In fact, a strong, yet manageable stress level may be necessary for strong bonds to form between two individuals (Esch & Stefano, 2005). Stress is thus believed to promote the formation of social bonds (Esch & Stefano, 2005).

This relationship, however, may be curvilinear. While stress may promote the process of bonding and creating romantic relationships, excessive and chronic stress may inhibit attachment and new bond formation, leading to social and physiological deprivation. It may compromise longitudinal health and survival (Esch & Stefano, 2005).

The relationship between love and stress may also be bi-directional. Just as stress can compromise social bonding, love can buffer against stress (Esch & Stefano, 2005). Those who possess better or effective strategies to cope with stress show better immune functions and sexual performance which may allow them to biologically pass on their genes. The psychological phenomena between experiencing love, stress, and reproduction have a biological match which is imbedded in the central nervous system structures and pathways (Esch & Stefano, 2005). What this suggests is that if one can love, one can be a better candidate for the survival of their species.

The complex relationship between stress and love is also reflected in the similarities between the neurobiological substrates involved in both phenomena. The same brain structures, for example, that are implicated in anxiety appear to be activated during romantic experiences. These structures include the amygdala along with related circuits and their associated neurotransmitters. Marazziti and Canale (2004) found that the neurobiological substrate of

falling in love not only involves the action of the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis. They also found that falling in love was associated with an increase in cortisol levels and their related neurotransmitters and modulators.

What is experienced as romantic love has been found to be driven by neuromodulators such as dopamine. Dopamine is involved in both sexual arousal and romantic feelings and is important for the brain's pleasure and reward pathways (Esch & Stefano, 2005; Francesco & Cervone, 2014; Stein & Vythilingum, 2009). Neurons in the brain release dopamine when animals take part in activities related to our survival or producing offspring (Esch & Stefano, 2005). These activities may include eating sugary foods, having sex, or falling in love. The flood of dopamine gives one a sense of satisfaction that encourages to continue these behaviors.

In a recent study, one research focused on the brain network of intense love by examining the neural correlates of long-term romantic love (Francesco & Cervone, 2014). In a study conducted by Acevedo et al. (2012), a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) on a group of "happily married, sexually monogamous" individuals who reported an intense romantic love for their partner as they viewed facial images of their partner versus a highly familiar acquaintance. fMRIs are a method that can show which regions of the brain operate in response to a certain stimulus. What was found was a high level of activity in the subcortical reward system of the mesolimbic, dopamine rich regions important for reward-processing (Acevedo et al., 2012; Talarci, 2012). Specifically, they found that early stage and long-term romantic love also showed activity in the caudate head, putamen, insular cortex, hippocampus, anterior cingulate cortex cerebellum and right ventral tegmental area (Acevedo et al., 2012; Bartels & Zeki, 2004; Talarci, 2012). The ventral tegmental area and the substantia nigra, is the source of

90% of the dopamine in the brain (Talarci, 2012). This supports the idea that love is driven by reward and pleasure rich regions of the brain (Acevedo et al., 2012).

In one study, prairie voles were examined to determine the importance of dopamine in mating. What was found was that male and female prairie voles developed an attachment to their partner after mating once (Debiec, 2007; Stein & Vythilingum, 2009). Such a development is dependent on the existence of dopamine. Researchers noticed that when the dopamine receptors in the nucleus accumbens, part of the reward pathway, was activated, male voles became attached to a female even without mating (de Boer, van Buel, & Ter Horst, 2012; Debiec, 2007). To support these findings, blocking those same dopamine receptors prevented males from developing a partner preference even when oxytocin (the "cuddle" hormone) was present (de Boer, van Buel, & Ter Horst, 2012; Debiec, 2007). The same findings were also found in people. In one study, people were asked to look at a picture of someone they were "in love with." What researchers found was that when doing so, dopamine-rich areas of the reward pathway became activated (Aron et al., 2005). These same areas were turned on in response to the promise of a monetary reward.

Although, in many studies, dopamine has been labeled as a "pleasure chemical," it has been labeled otherwise in other research. Studies also showed roulette players express just as much dopamine activity in the nucleus accumbens during near miss incidences as when they win (Chase & Clark, 2010). Therefore, near miss outcomes were associated with a significant response in the ventral striatum which was also demonstrated with monetary wins regardless of gambling severity. The relationship between near miss outcomes may augment dopamine transmission in disordered gambling which may also extend to "neurobiological similarities

between pathological gambling and drug addiction" (Chase & Clark, 2010, p. 6180). This suggests an explanation to why unrequited love may have a strong hold over humans.

There are other neuromodulators such as vasopressin and oxytocin that help produce the experience of romantic love. Vasopressin and oxytocin have been found to be involved with maternal and romantic bonding and attachment (de Boer, van Buel, & Ter Horst, 2012). These chemicals are released during childbirth, breastfeeding and orgasm and interact with and stimulating the dopamine reward system (de Boer, van Buel, & Ter Horst, 2012). Oxytocin and vasopressin also appear to play a role in monogamous behavior among prairie voles (Liu, Curtis, & Wang, 2001). It was found that the prairie vole has a higher density of oxytocin receptors in the brain including in areas implicated with reward and emotion-related memory formation. If the release of oxytocin and vasopressin is blocked, these voles do not develop partner preferences and become promiscuous like their montane prairie vole cousins (Liu, Curtis, & Wang, 2001; Stein & Vythilingum, 2009).

Morphinergic and encephalingeric pathways also exist in the reward-pleasure system. This observation has interesting implications as research has found that love has the capability to reduce pain (Talarci, 2012). In two studies, participants were subjected to severe and slight thermal pain in one hand. It was found that pain scores were reduced after participants were shown a picture of a person with whom they were in love (Younger et al., 2010) or were able to hold the hand of a person with whom they were in love (Master et al., 2009). The researchers posit that the morphinergic-encephalinergic system is a pain reduction system (Talarci, 2012). fMRI studies have also shown that the activation of the reward-pleasuring system is activated along with a reduction in the ventro-lateral nucleus of the thalamus (where pain is carried to the brain cortex) and supplementary motor area (Talarci, 2012). This suggests that the support and

love of a beloved can reduce pain or even seeing a photograph of someone they love can assist as a non-pharmacological pain reliever. Talarci (2012) also suggests that this finding supports understanding why unhappy individuals in love experience a more intense sense of pain and may typically complain of headaches, backaches or other kinds of pain.

Love may also have a dampening effect on certain areas of the brain that may explain the sense of "madness" experienced by those who are in love (Zeki, 2007). Love can be described by many as an energy that transforms people's lives, bringing them to do both extremely heroic or evil deeds. Thus, it is not all surprising that the core brain areas that are engaged during romantic love have significant connections to many parts of the cortical and subcortical parts of the brain (Zeki, 2007). These connections include those linked to the frontal, parietal, and middle temporal cortex in addition to the amygdala (Stein & Vythilingum, 2009; Talarci, 2012; Zeki, 2007). Increase in activity in the "romantic core areas" is correlated with decrease in activity or inactivation in the cortical zones in which they are connected (Zeki, 2007). One hypothesis is that romantic love may dampen and turn down the fear response (Bartels & Zeki, 2004; Talarci, 2012). This would make sense as making oneself vulnerable and building trust are crucial components to falling in love. In other studies where individuals looked at a picture of a person they loved, it was found that the activity in the amygdala, an area found to be connected to anger and fear, declined (Aron et al., 2005; Stein & Vythilingum, 2009; Zeki, 2007).

The deactivation of the amygdala can also be found in the brain of someone viewing something of beauty. Zeki (2007) explains that throughout history from the days of Plato onward, the path to love has been described as a path of beauty. Beauty and love are not far from erotic urges and are neurobiologically linked to desire (Zeki, 2007). Studies have found

that viewing an attractive face, being sexually aroused, and experiencing visual beauty stimulate the orbitofrontal cortex, and insula, and anterior cingulate cortex (Zeki, 2007). The activation of the orbitofrontal cortex, insula, and anterior cingulate cortex may explain why it seems much easier to fall in love with someone to whom you are attracted (Zeki, 2007).

Further, as mentioned before, the cortical zone interconnected with the parietal cortex and temporal lobe have also be found to be involved with negative emotions (Zeki, 2007). Studies suggest that romantic love can lead to a decrease in frontal cortex activity. This results in relaxing what is necessary to make proper judgements since the frontal cortex has been discovered to function in making judgment (Zeki, 2007). Zeki (2007) posits that this may be why those who are in love do not readily see their sweetheart's shortfalls and mothers believe their children can do no wrong, while maintaining their ability to effectively judge the contents of a book or scientific work.

The prefrontal cortex also exhibits decreased activity in those who are in love. The prefrontal region is associated with mentalizing. It plays an important role in visualization, intention, decision-making, and logical deduction (Talarci, 2012). It is associated with distinguishing between yourself and others, and figuring out what people are feeling or planning (Talarci, 2012; Zeki, 2007). The parieto-temporo-occipital region in particular provides a person with a sense of position in space or spatial separation of self from others (Zeki, 2007). When one falls in love, the decreased activity leads to challenges in making such distinctions. Thus, when experiencing love is significant enough, people may lose sight of their separateness from the ones with whom they are in love (Talarci, 2012; Zeki, 2007). Therefore, while it may feel like a configuration of madness, there is an essence of unity or oneness that many people experience

(Talarci, 2012). To some, it may feel like the rules of logic do not completely apply. Rather, once love sets in, sense goes out the window (Talarci, 2012).

Marazziti and Canale (2004) looked into the change that occurs in the level of sex hormones when a man and a woman fall in love. What they discovered was that men's testosterone levels decreased while women's testosterone levels increased. They hypothesized that the testosterone reduction in men might function to soften their masculine characteristics, reduce their extroversion, and lessen their aggressiveness (Marazziti & Canale, 2004). On the other hand, the rise in testosterone in women might increase their sexual desire and make it easier to take the risk of becoming romantically intimate with a man (Marazziti & Canale, 2004). The increase in testosterone levels would increase their extroversion and awaken their masculine attributes (Marazziti & Canale, 2004). Ultimately, this process may help bring the two sexes closer together, even if it is for a short amount of time (Marazziti & Canale, 2004).

Do men and women love differently? Is there a difference between men and women's brain region activity? In one study, seven men and women who were in love were assessed by an fMRI to assess the varying regions of brain activity when viewing an image of the individual with whom they were in love. What was found was that the greatest difference in activity was in the dorsal insula of the brain which is associated with penile tumescence or excitation in addition to the visual integration area (Talarci, 2012). Conversely women showed greatest activity in areas responsible for attention, memory, and emotion (Ortigue, 2010). These findings suggest that men fall in love with women and their physical features (i.e., faces) in a way that is associated with sexual arousal, while women seem to be more interested in the romantic aspect of love (Talarci, 2012). In fact, they may fall in love with the idea of love itself (Talarci, 2012).

It is further worth noting the difference and similarities of brain activity between varying types of love. There appears to be a deactivation of the brain when one experiences romantic love versus maternal love. Maternal and romantic love share a common and crucial evolutionary purpose which helps maintain and promote the species (Zeki, 2007). In addition, it shares a functional purpose that allows individuals to stay together for a period of time in their lives to facilitate this process (Zeki, 2007). Thus, maternal and romantic love support the "formation of firm bonds between individuals" by making them satisfying and pleasurable occurrences (Zeki, 2007). Stein and Vythilingum (2009) have also found activation in the anterior cingulate, medial insula, striatum and ventral tegmental area (VTA) which have been areas suggested for both maternal and romantic love experiences. Their activation differ though. For example, facial expressions are the significantly activating components in maternal love (Zeki, 2007).

Falling out of love is not a diagnosis listed in the American Psychiatric Association's (2013) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*. However, there are particular disorders of attachment and love that may overlap with normal attachment behaviors, obsessive compulsive symptoms, anxiety and even depression. Having a better understanding of the neuropsychological etiology of the concept of love and attachment may have significant implications for conceptualizing in terms of disordered attachment for those experiencing conditions such as autistic disorders. In fact, oxytocin has been considered a possible treatment for autistic disorder and other conditions (Stein & Vythilingum, 2009). In addition, understanding neurological reward pathways may be beneficial in understanding substance abuse which may create a false sense of reward. In some cases, substances may be used primarily because of the feelings of social attachment they evoke which may not be satisfied in one's every day experiences. Conversely, other disorders of love and attachment

such as erotomania (a delusional disorder where the affected individual believes another is in love with him or her), may require intervention methods with mediators that inhibit these reward pathways.

Theory of motivational distortion. Unrequited love is one of the most used storylines, themes, and plots seen in literary compositions. Both men and women are constantly loving, but not being loved in return. In other similar scenarios, two partners fall in love, but the feelings fade from one, leaving the other feeling devastated. While love grows for some, it also perishes quite unpredictably with others. In these latter situations, individuals end up esteeming and cherishing another who merely does not reciprocate those feelings.

Love seems to work when it is balanced and reciprocal (Herbert, 2015). Herbert (2015) posits that the need for responsiveness is so forceful that lovers "often distort reality" in order to "validate the emotional response they need and desire." This process is referred to as *motivational distortion* by psychological scientist, Edward Lemay (2015) who studies relationships. Lemay and Clark (2015) theorize that the craving to bond with another in a close committed relationship is so strong that it can influence our thinking. Facets of our thinking which may be altered include attention, memory and interpretation which allow us to see and believe what we want to be true (Herbert, 2015; Lemay & Clark, 2015).

One study by Lemay and Clark (2015), in particular, supports this idea. The study's findings suggest a biased perception of responsiveness in partners (Lemay & Clark, 2015). Lemay and Clark observed that partners believe that their feelings are reciprocated when they feel deeply for the other. When a caring partner in love had a personal problem, the other was seen as supportive regardless of what objective observers saw in terms of support (Lemay & Clark, 2015). Lemay and Clark's participants also were observed to use biased memories as the

specific cognitive process to distort their beliefs about their partners. Those who were motivated to bond with their partners remembered their partners as being more responsive (e.g., demonstrating caring, positive regard, and commitment) (Lemay & Clark, 2015). These perceptions were found to be independent of the actual feelings and memories of the interactions that had occurred (Lemay & Clark, 2015).

But what does this say about the way people in love think about their relationships? Is a biased perception of a relationship necessarily a bad thing? Lemay and Clark (2015) believe quite the contrary. In fact, it was found that these biases can be a "tonic" for both the person and the relationship itself. Positively biased perceptions allow an individual to feel more relationship satisfaction and act in ways which preserve interactions with their partners. Lemay and Clark (2015) state that partners who experience such biased thinking are "less emotionally [reactive]" and more trusting which feeds a cycle of positive consequences (p. 74).

Attribution theory. Heider (1958) divided attributions into two forms. The first was *internal attributions* which involved a process of assigning the cause of behavior to internal features rather than outside influences (Heider, 1958). Thus, when we look at how others behave, we tend to seek enduring internal attributions such as personality, motive, or beliefs (Heider, 1958). On the other end of the attribution spectrum was external attributions. *External attributions* involve a process of assigning the cause of behavior to a situation or event beyond one's control (Heider, 1958).

Jones and Davis (1965) believe that particular attention is shown to what are perceived to be intentional behaviors as opposed to accidental (or "unthinking") behaviors. Intentional behaviors imply motive. Internal attributions offer evidence which allow us to make forecasts about future behavior.

Jones and Davis (1965) proposed a *correspondent inference theory* that designates conditions under which dispositional attributes are created. Under these circumstances, people assume that people's behaviors are intentional. They believe that people draw on five sources of information to make these correspondent inferences. The first of these sources is choice. A behavior is assumed to be freely chosen if it is due to an internal factors such as personality (Jones & Davis, 1965). A second source of information considered is whether the act was accidental or intentional. Intentional behaviors would be attributed to one's personality and accidental behaviors would be attributed to situations or external factors out of the control of the individual. A third source of information involves assessing whether the behavior is socially desirable. Behaviors low in social desirability or non-conforming lead people to make internal inferences more than socially undesirable ones (Jones & Davis, 1965). Therefore, if one observes an individual sitting on the ground in the middle of the sidewalk, the low social desirability of this action would lead to its attribution to the individual's personality. The fourth source of information that leads people to make a correspondent inference is hedonistic relevance. If the individual's behavior seems to be directly meant to benefit or harm another, it is likely to be judged intentional (Jones & Davis, 1965). The last source of information identified by Jones and Davis as relevant to a judgment of intentionality is personalism. If an individual's behavior appears to have a notable impact on people, it is typically assumed to be "personal" rather than just a byproduct of a situation.

Kelley (1967) developed a covariation model that has become one of the best-known attribution theories to judge whether an action should be attributed to personality (internal attribution) or to the environment (external attribution). Kelly (1967) described covariation as a way in which individuals combine multiple observations at different times and situations to

perceive the covariation of an observed cause and effect. Kelley (1967) proposed that people take three different kinds of evidence into account when formulating their judgments. The first factor is a consensus or the extent to which others behave in the same way in similar situations (Kelley, 1967). If Bob smokes with his friend after a meal, his behavior is high in consensus. On the other hand, if he smokes alone, it is low. The second factor is distinctiveness or the extent to which the person behaves in similar situations (Kelley, 1967). If Bob only smokes when he is with friends, it is high in distinctiveness. On the other hand, if he smokes at any time regardless of friends being there, then distinctiveness is low. The third factor proposed by Kelley is consistency or the extent to which a person behaves a certain way every time a specific condition happens.

Kelley (1967) also proposed that individuals fall back on past experiences and look for either multiple necessary causes or multiple sufficient causes. Multiple necessary causes are explanations which are essential for a certain effect to occur. For example, a marathon trainer must be healthy, highly motivated, and train hard to win an event. Without these causes, a win may never occur. On the other hand, individuals may look at multiple sufficient causes which involve identifying one explanation sufficient enough to explain a certain event or behavior to occur. For example, if a marathon runner fails a drug test, it may be because she tried to cheat, took an illegal substance on accident, or was tricked into taking the substance by another team mate or coach. Any of these cases may be sufficient for a marathon runner to fail a drug test.

By the twenty-first century, a focus on the interactions of attributions and communication behaviors in close relationships began to emerge. Manusov (2001) contended that attributions might be thought of as communication cues. Attributions convey the sender's understandings or explanations for other's behaviors and events.

Minding theory. As mentioned earlier, relationships can be maintained and enhanced when positive and accurate attributions about partners are created (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997). This is termed "minding the close relationship" and embraces the idea that there is a consistently "mutual never-ending knowing process" that involves self-disclosure and imploring self-disclosure from one's partner to enhance a relationship (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997). In this sense, *minding* becomes the deed of operating one's mind decisively in thinking and acting pertinent to the relationship (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997).

In minding theory, attributional activity is seen as a significant way that an individual develops a sense of meaning in relationships (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997). Essentially, attributional activity mirrors the trust people have in their partners (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997). When negative behaviors such as rudeness or insensitivity are attributed to external sources, individuals are likely telling themselves that the other is not insensitive, but rather it is the situation that is at fault. This is because one may want to believe better of them. On the other hand, if positive acts are attributed to external events, people may be attempting to convince themselves not to believe in their love or trust the sincerity of their partners. What is emphasized in the minding theory are the relationship-enhancing attributions. This means that positive behaviors are attributed to dispositional causes while negative behaviors are attributed to external origins (Herbert, 2015; Lemay & Clark, 2015). Heider (1958) recognizes that attributions of causality and responsibility are often mixtures of internal and external sources. In well-minded relationships, attributional activities are typically utilized to develop a healthy and fair mixture of both internal and external attributions (Heider, 1958).

The use of a fair combination of internal and external attributions suggests that partners using this strategy are able to recognize how easy it is to mistaken a partner's behavior, feelings,

intentions, and motivations, and the significance of being aware of these things in different situations (Heider, 1958). Well-minded relationships are frequently coddled by the partner's flexibility and willingness to reexamine these attributions. Occasionally, it is important to realize that negative attributions are healthy as it allows partners to address issues and negotiate stronger relationships between them (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997). Thus, by using the knowledge they gained about each other, partners can develop a balance of good and bad attributions, rather than all good or all bad, to create a healthy relationship.

  Idealization. Romantic love is rarely reality based. It is more often characterized by positive illusions or idealizations. Because of these heightened positive feelings, the experience of romantic love can amplify one's wishes to be with another for a very long time. It is hypothesized that divorce rates are higher because of idealization dissipates over time (Ben-Zeév, 2012). Thus, it is questioned if some degree of idealization should be present for a relationship to survive or if is it possible for a relationship to thrive on accurate reality (Ben-Zeév, 2012)?

  Some research has found that people exaggerate the extent to which their partner resembles an ideal, while others are capable of assessing reasonable accuracy attributes (i.e., attractiveness, status, kindness, trustworthiness) (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010). This suggests that there is a combination of accuracy and bias when perceiving our partners. Fletcher and Kerr (2010) found that opposing features are present not only in our evaluation of our partners but also in how we want to be evaluated as well. Thus, partners tend to prefer their partners to think of them in ways that are consistent with their own self-perceptions, including those that are negative (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010). Other evidence suggests that partners appreciate positive

biases, particularly with respect to perceptions they consider significant to intimate relationships such as warmth, attractiveness and status (Fletcher & Kerr, 2010).

Ben-Zeév (2012) states that there is always some form of idealization or disillusionment mixed into reality-based perceptions about one's relationship and significant other. Ben-Zeév (2012) describes idealization as a "complex cognitive and evaluative process" that focuses one's attention on the positive aspects and takes less notice of the negative aspects. Idealization is significant in relationships as it promotes romantic relationships to continue (Ben-Zeév, 2012). In fact, it is correlated with the stability and longevity of a relationship (Ben-Zeév, 2012). Idealization is typically seen in the initial stages of relationships when one does not know the other very well so fills in the gaps with positive assumptions (Ben-Zeév, 2012).

Lovers are archetypally subject to disillusionment when idealization is found to be inaccurate (Ben-Zeév, 2012). Disillusionment is a decline in positive perceptions, and an increase in negative ones toward a person's partner and relationship. Romance is perceived to be an experience in which two individuals must be very close to one another (Ben-Zeév, 2012). Thus, there is a desire and motivation to constantly idealize the other. But as two individuals do become closer, idealization becomes more difficult to sustain as reality becomes more clear and harder to disregard. Research has found that couples married for at least seven years before they divorced were likely experiencing disillusionment or high initial affection followed by an abrupt decline in response to a change in their perceptions of their partners (Buehlman, Gottman, & Katz, 1992; Niehuis et al., 2011).

It seems that romantic love welcomes both positive bias and accurate knowledge. The real question is how these two seemingly opposing factors can be combined to create a strong romantic relationship. Lackenbauer et al. (2010) argued that although people enthusiastically

desire having authentic, open and honest relationships, they also seek to be viewed in a charitable and positively biased manner. Having this positively biased attitude is perceived as reflecting their partner's profound love. In addition, an accurate approach aids in preventing disillusionment when the other partner learns more over time (Lackenbauer et al., 2010).

While idealization is present in strong romantic relationships, it should be moderate in nature and used in the general framework for evaluating another rather than specific traits. General positive beliefs are demonstrated to become more self-fulfilling for someone in a relationship (Ben-Zeév, 2012). Moderation of idealization is key and can be seen metaphorically as wearing rose colored glasses. When the glasses are transparent, one may not be able to experience love. On the other hand, if the glasses are too opaque, an individual may be subject to disillusionment once the spectacles are removed and the reality is revealed. This teaches us that while it is important to wear these glasses, we should be careful that these soften our perceptions rather than distort reality (Ben-Zeév, 2012). A stable and satisfying relationship is a reflection of the partners' ability to see imperfection in an idealized light. Longer relationships echo an idealized notion of the significant partner for all of the relationship (Ben-Zeév).

The Distressful Aspects of Love

While many theories focus on why we love, much of the research literature on love focuses on emotional and psychological grief and suffering of the experience of relationship dissolution. It is generally agreed that being in love can be an emotional roller coaster ride. It is chilling and exhilarating, but can also involve a sense of agony. Because of love, we sometimes find ourselves. But because of love, we sometimes lose ourselves. The grief experience is similar to experiencing the loss of a loved one who has passed away. Studies have shown that marital or relational dissolution are identified as major life events and can result in negative

outcomes such as mood disorders and complicated grief symptoms (Field, 2011; Kendler, Hettema, Butera, Gardner, & Prescott, 2003). Distress felt in premarital break ups can be influenced by how close the individuals felt to their former partners, the duration of the relationship, and if they felt it would be difficult to find a new partner (Rhoades, Kamp Dush, Atkins, Stanley, & Markman, 2011; Simpson, 1987). In addition, those who broke up before marriage reported lower life satisfaction, which seemed particularly true for couples who cohabitated or had plans to marry before their breakups (Rhoades, Kamp Dush, Atkins, Stanley, & Markman, 2011). Smaller declines in life satisfaction were discovered however for those who resumed dating.

It was also found that the experience of rejection could potentially cause extreme emotional pain so raw that individuals could no longer function and in some extreme cases exhibit suicidal or homicidal behaviors (Sbarra & Ferrer, 2006). Post-traumatic stress symptoms could also occur (e.g., a preoccupation with the loss of a partner, perseveration, physical and emotional distress, exaggerated attempts to reestablish the relationship, or angry and vengeful behavior) (Chung et al., 2003; Sbarra & Ferrer, 2006). Generally, post-relational dissolution adjustment is affected by which partner initiated the break up, if it was sudden and unexpected, the time since the event occurred, and if the partner was dating again (Field, Diego, Pelaez, Deeds, & Delgado, 2009; Rhoades, Kamp Dush, Atkins, Stanley, & Markman, 2011).

In addition to psychological pain, physical distress has been associated with romantic loss. A phenomenon known as Broken Heart Syndrome, also known as stress cardiomyopathy, may be felt and can be described as physical pain in the heart or chest area (Field, 2011; John Hopkins Medicine; Wilson, 2013). It is a condition in which powerful emotional or physical stress can produce rapid and severe heart muscle weakness typically following a variety of

emotional stressors such as grief, fear, anger, or surprise (John Hopkins Medicine; Wilson, 2013). While it feels like a heart attack, it differs in that the cardiac enzymes normally released during an attack are not present (Wittstein, 2005). In addition, angiograms reveal arteries are unclogged and no permanent heart damage can be seen (Field, 2011). Stress cardiomyopathy is also dissimilar to panic attacks. Panic attacks cause similar physiological symptoms experienced to perceived stress (Wilson, 2013). They do not cause the physical damage to the heart muscle as seen with stress cardiomyopathy (Wilson, 2013).

Is Love Different for Men and Women?

What about the differences in experiences and attitudes of love between men versus women? Hendrick, Hendrick, Foote, and Slapion-Foote (1984) focused on gender differences in attitudes towards love and found that while males tended to be more erotic and lucid in their love attitudes, females were more pragmatic, storgic (perceiving the partner as a friend), and animated. Yet in another study, it was found that there was little variance between men and women's relationship beliefs (Sprecher & Toro-Morn, 2002). Where they seemed to differ was their response to breakups. Following a breakup, women experienced hopelessness and were twice as likely to develop severe depression when compared to men (Field, Diego, Pelaez, Deeds, & Delgado, 2009). Following romantic rejection, men were three to four times more likely to commit suicide (Ustun & Sartorius, 1995). In addition, men who demonstrated *agape* (unconditional self-less love), mania, and obsessive jealous love styles had higher intensities of emotional anguish than women (Ustun & Sartorius, 1995). The inconsistencies in findings regarding the differences between how love is experienced between men and women support the importance of continued exploration of potential differences.

Seasons of Love

Richard Lewis, a famous actor and comedian, once said, "When you're in love, it is the most glorious two-and-a-half days of your life" (Winokur, 2013, p. 207). Lewis' comment underscores the sometimes fleeting or short-lived nature of romantic love. Regardless of its transient nature, though, researchers have yet to discover a society in which love does not exist (Chatel, 2014). "Anthropologists have found evidence of romantic love in 170 societies" and while each are different from one another, it still takes the equivalent evolutionary path of lust to attachment (Chatel, 2014).

In the early days of being in love, a couple may feel a lustful sense of euphoria. Susan Piver, a New York Times best-selling author, terms this a "love affair" (Piver, 2014). When two individuals meet, they likely feel they are constantly surrounded by an enchanting aura (Winters, 2014). At this point, it likely feels that love seems to have no bounds and the universe is in completely perfect harmony. "Fascination, joy, sex, inspiration, delight and sex, sex, sex" can all be experienced here (Piver, 2014, p. 1).

The sad part however is that in most circumstances, these days also known as infatuation, fade quickly (Chatel, 2014; Piver, 2014). After a few months of courtship and the world which once seemed beautiful, does not seem so immaculate anymore. Couples who were once seen as inseparable and cooing to each other across the grocery store can be seen quarreling six months down the line (Winters, 2014). Dorothy Tennov (as cited in Chatel, 2014), a renowned psychologist, states that your infatuation stage can last between 18 months to 3 years. Gunther (2013), a clinical psychologist and marriage counselor with 40 years of counseling experience with couples, notes that she has worked with many intimate partners who completely adored each other in a romantic connection they "felt would never end" and could not understand how

"a bond so intense, so passionate, and so real, could have diminished" (Gunther, 2013).

Romantic love based on "we-will-never-change-the-way-we-feel" appears to be sadly doomed to

lose its bond (Gunther, 2013).

While a loving bond may begin with infatuation, its last stage is often associated with a

greater sense of security and attachment. Despite couples' earlier assumptions that passionate

love was the defining aspect of a successful relationship, they often discover that it is this greater

sense of commitment and connection that ultimately results in relational happiness (Chatel,

2014).

Psychologists have explained that reasons for breakup at this point may be due to loss of

trust and confidence, an expectation-reality mismatch (disillusionment), or insecurity. Over

time, the "high" once associated with the romantic period decreases. A relationship may proceed

smoothly if peace and comfort is what each partner desires (Winters, 2014). One of the biggest

blocks to the development of a healthy romantic relationship is the assumption that conflicts are

associated with relational failures. In actuality, conflicts are inevitable in relationships. It turns

out that only 30% of conflicts get resolved, while 50-60% remain habitual (Gottman, 2006;

Winters, 2012). When partners learn that some conflict is habitual and even normal, and learn to

manage rather than "solve" them, they can develop more realistic expectations (Winters, 2014).

Attachment: From Infancy to Adulthood

Many psychologists believe that the core of romantic interaction is the amalgamation of a

parent-child bond infused with lustful fulfillment (Gunther, 2013). Some believe that the role of

romantic interactions is to recreate the relationships each partner desired as a child, combined

with adult appropriate sexual passion (Gunter, 2013). Combining the unconscious assurance of

safety and unconditional love with physical appeal, propinquity, and chemistry offers a

"seductive package that is exhilarating to the mind, soul and heart" (Gunther, 2013, p. 1). However, when partners promise to never abscond, continuously support, and unconditionally love forever, they are setting up the relationship for a hazardously no-win future since no adult can give another what they long for (Gunther, 2013).

People establish their first relationships and learn through the experience of attachments as children. Attachments are emotional bonds in which a person's sense of security is tied in the relationship (Boyd & Bee, 2015). These relationships do not have to be with biological parents (Boyd & Bee, 2015). The development of these attachments depend on the quality and quantity of the interactions that occur (Boyd & Bee, 2015).

Establishing attachment. Bowlby (1969) suggested four phases of developing an infant's attachment over the first 24 to 36 months of life. During the first phase, babies exhibit behaviors such as crying, smiling and making eye contact (Boyd & Bee, 2015). During the second phase, babies from three to six months old direct these signals to fewer people and are less responsive to unfamiliar people. The third phase of establishing attachment is when true attachment emerges (Boyd & Bee, 2015). At this time, children begin to show "proximity-seeking" behaviors which are demonstrated by following and clinging to what is considered a "safe base" (Boyd & Bee, 2015). This occurs especially when a child feels anxious, injured, or hungry until the age of two years old (Boyd & Bee, 2015). The last phase involves creating an internal model of an attachment relationship which allows children (older than two years old) envision how an anticipated action affects their bonds with caregivers (Boyd & Bee, 2015; van IJzendoorn, 2005). This internal schema affects relationships and significant romantic relationships throughout life (Boyd & Bee, 2015).

Attachment patterns. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) found that virtually all babies seem to go through these phases of attachment as previously described, but the quality of the attachment that forms varies from each infant (Boyd & Bee, 2015). The variations of attachment patterns can be described using Ainsworth's system (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Using a process called the *Strange Situation*, Ainsworth observed children in a variety of situations (Boyd & Bee, 2015). Ainsworth suggested reactions to these situations could be categorized as: *secure*, *insecure-avoidant*, and *insecure-ambivalent* attachments (Boyd & Bee, 2015). A fourth attachment pattern type, insecure-disorganized attachment, has since been added (Boyd & Bee, 2015; Main & Solomon, 1990).

When a child's family environment or life situation is sensibly consistent, the security or insecurity also remains stable over many years (Weinfield & Egeland, 2004). When these circumstances drastically change however, whether due to domestic violence, divorce, abuse, physical illness, moving, or the death of a parent, these attachment bonds change as well (Boyd & Bee, 2015).

Further, although attachment styles may change over time, they remain linked to the internal model established during infancy. Attachment patterns seem to be a property of every relationship (Boyd & Bee, 2015). Attachment patterns are quite specific to the person to whom the individual is attached (Boyd & Bee, 2015; Minzi, 2010). For example, while a child may be securely attached to his or her father, the child may be insecurely attached to his or her mother. While the security of attachments may change over time, the internal model typically becomes a "property" of the child by the age of four or five, and these models become more resilient to change. Children begin to use these models to make generalizations about relationships (Boyd & Bee, 2015).

How attachment styles may affect romantic relationships. Firestone (2013) examined the links between Ainsworth's classification and a wide range of behaviors of children, adolescents, and adults. Attachment models influence how one's needs are met (Firestone, 2013). Firestone (2013) found that children rated as securely attached in infancy were found to be more sociable, positive in their behavior, less clinging and dependent, less aggressive, more empathic, and emotionally mature (Boyd & Bee, 2015; Firestone, 2013). These individuals were also likely to be regarded as leaders, to be confident, have higher self-esteem, and able to more easily interact with others and meet theirs and other's needs (Boyd & Bee, 2015; Firestone, 2013). Individuals who had insecure attachments (most specifically avoidant ones) tend to have less supportive relationships and tend to practice riskier sexual behavior earlier (Boyd & Bee, 2015).   Those who had insecure attachments were also typically seen to pick a partner who fit with that maladaptive pattern, thus choosing another who was not an ideal choice to make him or her happy (Firestone, 2013).

Firestone (2013) hypothesizes that people may select their partners on the basis of congruence with current attachment beliefs and models. For example, people with an insecure-anxious attachment may feel that in order to get close to and meet their own needs, they must remain close to their partners at all times (Firestone, 2013). At the same time, they may seek a partner who is distant. This would support their attachment perceptions or beliefs while aggravating their own fears (Firestone, 2013). Insecure-anxiously attached individuals may construe independent actions of their significant other as an assertion of their own fears (Firestone, 2013). An example would be if their romantic partners were socializing with other friends. An insecure-anxiously attached individual might say, "See, she doesn't really love me. She's going to dump me. Now, I don't trust her."

In another example, those with an insecure-avoidant attachment style may have a tendency to be distant. They may have learned that the way his or her needs can be met is to act like they do not have any. These individuals may choose partners who are more possessive or need constant attention (Firestone, 2013). These individuals may also become "pseudo-independent" and lead private or more secluded lives, which deny the importance of loved ones or involve detaching easily from them (Firestone, 2013).

An insecure-ambivalent attachment style leads individuals to live in a state of fear of being too close or too distant from others. These individuals may attempt to keep their feelings hidden even though they cannot (Firestone, 2013). They may try to run away from their feelings, but find it very hard to do so (Firestone, 2013). In the end, the ones they want to go to for safety may be the same people they fear the most. Though they may acknowledge the importance of opening up to their partners to get their needs met, they may still fear that they will be hurt in the process (Firestone, 2013). These partners often become clingy when they feel rejected but also feel suffocated when they get close (Firestone, 2013).

The healthiest of the four attachment patterns is a secure attachment. Securely attached adults are more satisfied in relationships as they are secure and connected while giving themselves and their partners the freedom to liberally move around (Firestone, 2013). Securely attached people are able to offer support when the partners are distressed, and to seek help when they are distraught.

It is important to note that although an individual's childhood attachment style may be predictive of how that individual interacts with partners in adulthood, it does not have to define him or her. Each individual can work toward an "earned secure attachment" (Firestone, 2013,

p. 1). The process requires first becoming aware of one's attachment style and the ways one defends or guards against becoming emotionally connected.

Other considerations. According to Gunther (2013), most people come from an incomplete childhoods. They have a desire to replicate what they once had, while seeking a "fantasy" that is not sustainable in present time. Attempting to maintain an illusion, however, can contribute to a dwindling of romantic love over time.

Generally speaking, children who have been "well-loved" or who enjoyed very strong, secure attachments describe their parents as almost God-like, more than human (Gunther, 2013). Their parents, in turn, may describe their children as essentially flawless and perfect (Gunther, 2013). Romantic love promises partners an eternal state of mutual adoration. Partners who are romantically in love may use terms like "baby," a diminutive that implicitly communicates this preciousness (Gunther, 2013).

Most children, however, were not loved perfectly. So how might this past affect the way they experience love in the present and future? In these cases, partners may eulogize the way they were raised in order to compensate for what was not there while they were children. Gunther (2013) states that romantic love is given a "perplexing and mystifying twist" from inaccurate to even hurtful memories. It presents an enigma, where the object of one's affection must be slightly out of reach or sporadically unavailable (Gunther, 2013). This is because the unconscious memories may battle too much with the perfection of the present romantic connection (Gunther, 2013). Individuals who were not loved as children, may paradoxically yearn for a love similar to what they received as a child and replicate this pattern with their partners.

Gottman's Love Lab

Love is not as simple as many of us would like it to be. Unfortunately, it cannot be reduced to physical stimulations of the brain. Being in love with another individual can be rather tough at times. Some couples may be able to stay in love, maintaining a lifelong relationship, while others may not. One man, John Gottman, might be one of the world's most calculating romantic. To some, he may be the best researcher on couple relationships in the world (L'Abate & Ryback, 2012). He has been able to identify key behaviors that may prevent or rescue a relationship from going bad. After years of research, Gottman is able to predict with 88-94% accuracy whether a couple (homosexual or heterosexual) will stay happily together or not. By listening to couples converse about their problems and using an affect coding system that tracks facial expressions, dialogue, and physical reactions to recognize 20 categories of emotions, Gottman and his team have been able to identify couple dynamics that contribute to success and failure in intimate relationships (Gottman, 2006; Gottman & Carrere, 2000).

According to Gottman (2006), the things that make us fall in love with another person are not necessarily a good predictor of longitudinal success in relationships. In fact, Gottman (2006) notes that relationships not based on love (i.e., arranged marriages) may be more stable than those based on romantic love. He posits that this is because love can cloud one's judgment.

Sternberg (as cited in Gottman, 2006) offers a model for long-term relationships. In it, he identifies three types of love: romance, sex, and passion. He notes that long-term relationships require a different map from romantic engagements. In successful long-term relationships, couples begin to observe whether they are being treated with love, affection, and respect; feeling nurtured and supported; enjoying time spent together and feeling like "flows like wine"; noting

the ease of being together; or liking oneself when with the other person (Sternberg, as cited in Gottman, 2006).

Because the level of predictability in couple success and failure is so high, Gottman (2006) believes there is a true science to understanding the complexities of a relationship and can boil it down to a few simple rules. Contrary to popular belief, Gottman (2006) believes sex, romance, and passion are not magic. In fact, he believes that the idea of magic of love is a lie. People use the idea of this "magic" to not take responsibility for making a relationship work. He argues that what people may assume is "magic" is actually the work of pheromones or hormones. In fact, according to Gottman, there is a recipe to creating long-term relationships. Individuals have a lot of responsibility for love, and emotional and sexual fidelity in a relationship. The "masters of relationships" are those who are naturally good at relationships (Gottman, 2006). These individuals demonstrate a habit of looking for things to appreciate. Those who struggle to maintain long-term relationships, tend to focus on their partners' mistakes and are constantly scanning for what their partner is doing wrong (Gottman, 2006).

The four horsemen. Not surprisingly, the most serious relationship damage occurs during disagreements (Kita, 2000, p. 88). What is important to note is that it is not about the topic discussed but rather the way in which it is debated. Gottman's studies have identified vital emotional reactions that may either be constructive or disparaging to the relationship. Labeled the "four horsemen of the apocalypse" by Gottman (2006), the destructive reactions include criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling.

Criticism can be described as a complaint which throws in blame and "character assassination" (Kita, 2000, p. 88). It is different from complaining in that a complaint focuses on a specific behavior such as: "I am angry that you did not wash the dishes" (Kita, 2000, p. 88).

On the other hand, this can be turned into a criticism such as: "You are so lazy" (Kita, 2000, p. 88). In an argument, too much criticism leads to contempt. These conversations are tainted with ridicule, cynicism, and mockery (Kita, 2000).

Contempt is the most damaging of the four. It is characterized by casual insults or sarcastic remarks that reveal an inequality in the relationships that is believed to be difficult to repair (Gottman, 2006; Gottman & Carrere, 2000; Kita, 2000). The reason why contempt is so poisonous to a relationship is because it is powered by "long simmering negative thoughts about your partner" and conveys disgust (Kita, 2000, p. 88). An illustration of a contemptuous extension of the previous banter could be something like, "Your laziness makes me sick. You're an inconsiderate pig" (Kita, 2000, p. 88).

In the face of constant criticism and contempt is a natural inclination to defend one's self. However, defensiveness, rather than defusing a situation may escalate the situation further as it is a way of blaming one's partner rather than taking responsibility (Kita, 2000). *Defensiveness* is described as reacting to a complaint with "righteous indignation" or as if one is an innocent victim and not taking responsibility for the problem (Gottman, 2006, pp. 38-39).

The last of the four horsemen is *stonewalling*. With no hope of progress, one partner (the man in 85% of heterosexual relationships) typically tunes out and does not seems to care or hear the partner's complaints (Kita, 2000). Stonewalling is known as withdrawing from a conversation (Gottman, 2006). Stonewalling in a relationship typically comes last as it "takes time for the negativity to become overwhelming" (Kita, 2000, p. 88).

Understanding conflict. As previously mentioned, there is no perfect romantic relationship and no two individuals can avoid a conflict. Gottman (2006) categorizes these couples into five types: Conflict-Avoiding, Volatile, Validating, Hostile, and Hostile-Detached.

Conflict avoiders minimize persuasion attempts and emphasize areas of common ground (Fulwiler, 2014). These individuals avoid conflict by avoiding the expression of what they need from their partners. Because conflict becomes minimized, they congratulate their relationships for being overall happy. Gottman took note that an important aspect of this type of couple is a mixture of having interdependence and independence as they have clear boundaries as separate people with different interests (Fulwiler, 2014).

Volatile couples are on the other end of the spectrum from conflict avoiders. These couples are intensely emotional (Fulwiler, 2014). While in a conflict, they persistently use a strategy of attempting to persuade their partners. Such debating is not necessarily bad. It can be characterized by a lot of laughter, humor, and pleasure (Fulwiler, 2014). The idea is that they seem to love to argue, but do so respectfully with no insults and contempt (Fulwiler, 2014). No clear boundaries are well established and there seems to be a significant overlap of their worlds. What they emphasize, unlike conflict avoiders, is an ability to preserve communication and honesty throughout their relationship (Fulwiler, 2014). Like conflict avoiders, though, they seem to have a positive-to-negative affect ratio of 5:1 (Fulwiler, 2014).

Between conflict avoiders and volatile couples are validating couples. These couples tend to be calm, neutral, and somewhat expressive (Fulwiler, 2014). These couples tend to emphasize supporting each other and are often characterized by empathy (Fulwiler, 2014). These couples are able to confront their differences, but may choose to bite their tongue on others. When conflict becomes argumentative, validating couples tend to turn to compromise and only become mildly emotionally expressive (Fulwiler, 2014). Like volatile and conflict avoiders, validating couples have a positive-to-negative affect ratio of 5:1 (Fulwiler, 2014).

Similar to validating conflict couples are hostile conflict couples. The difference is that there is a high level of defensiveness in both partners (Fulwiler, 2014). These couples typically criticize each other a lot, using qualifiers like "you always" and "you never" while complaining and whining (Fulwiler, 2014). These couples typically do not attempt to support or understand each other's points of view. According to Gottman, manifestations of all four horsemen are present in this conflict style (Fulwiler, 2014).

The last type of couple conflict style is the hostile-detached conflict style. The partners in these couples had very different conflict styles. These couples typically were comprised of one partner with a validating conflict style and another with a volatile conflict style (Fulwiler, 2014). While initially, these partners would both appear to be validators, they would begin to diverge during escalating conflicts. One would withdraw while the other would begin to display a volatile conflict style and not allow his or her partner to withdraw (Fulwiler, 2014). Gottman states that these couples often are those who tend to divorce more than hostile couples since they are unable to regulate their negativity.

The recipe. The constructive behaviors associated with "happy" couples involved in a dispute include being able to repair an argument with behaviors like humor, changing the subject, or using language that indicates they are taking their partner's feelings into account (Gottman & Carrere, 2000). Gottman (2006) notes that criticism and defensiveness are found in all relationships but what distinguishes the "masters" from those who are more at risk of disjunction is their ability to make successful repair attempts when they notice that things are not going well (L'Abate & Ryback, 2012).

Gottman and Gottman (2011) discovered multiple principles that create a "Sound Relationship House." They posit that trust prevents a long-term relationship from breaking up.

What, though, is the nature of trust? Gottman posits that "…in a trusting relationship we take as given that our partner has our best interest at heart rather than by self interest" (L'Abate & Ryback, 2012, p. 183). This "Sound Relationship House" can be described by the next seven principles.

The first of these principles involves the enhancement of the couple's "love map" (Gottman & Gottman, 2011; L'Abate, 2012). Each partner should become infinitely familiar with the other's world and relational expectations based on past experiences. A detailed love map should include awareness of major events in the lives of each and should be updated regularly (Gottman, 2006; Gottman & Gottman, 2011).

The second principle involves nurturing fondness and admiration, reminding each other of their positive qualities. This provides the basis for a rewarding relationship (Gottman & Gottman, 2011). A "culture of appreciation" should be fostered. Gottman (as cited in Kita, 2000) states that one of the reasons long-term relationships crumble is that partners begin to take each other for granted and live in an environment of petty grumbles rather than earnest thanks.

The next principle involves turning toward one another. Gottman and Gottman (2011) describe this as a process of making "bids" for each other's attention, affection, humor, or support.

The fourth principle involves allowing our partners to influence us. In this sense, partners treat each other with respect and do not resist or engage in a power struggle (Gottman & Gottman, 2011). During disagreements, partners actively search for common ground rather than insisting to have their way (Gottman & Gottman, 2011).

The fifth principle involves working together to resolve solvable problems. Couples that complain rather than criticize, seek to de-escalate tensions, soothe one another during conflicts, and find a compromise have more successful relationships (Gottman & Gottman, 2011).

The next principle involves learning to "overcome gridlock" (Gottman & Gottman, 2011). Gottman and Gottman (2011) state that many perpetual conflicts are gridlocked by partner's unexpressed dreams that contribute to what appear to be fixed positions on these issues. This may harm a relationship. In other successful relationships, partners integrate each other's goals (as concrete as living in a certain house to wanting an adventure) into their notion of what the relationship should be (Gottman & Gottman, 2011).

The last principle involves creating a "shared meaning" (Gottman & Gottman, 2011). In becoming an "us," couples essentially create a microculture of mini-rituals or customs (like Sunday dinner out or movie nights). Gottman and Gottman (2011) posit that when a couple has this shared sense of meaning, conflict is less likely to become intense.

In the end, it means that sex, romance, and passion are about taking in information and energy as opposed to broadcasting them (Gottman, 2006). Rather than being about being sexy or attractive, intimate relationships are about being interested, receptive, and attuned to one's partner and "taking in something deep and fundamental about them" (Gottman, 2006; L'Abate & Ryback, 2012, p. 183). Intimacy can deteriorate if one does not put energy into it. Couples can eventually ignore one another and stop courtship (Gottman, 2006). Many times, what is noticed is that the energy can focus on children or work instead. Gottman (2006) believes that anyone can learn what to do if the "four horsemen of the apocalypse" start to attack since there is a scientific basis to this. The trust that is built between partners is something that is built over

time. It requires emotional attunement, positivity, and the repair of negativity in the dynamics of the relationship (L'Abate & Ryback, 2012).

Summary

To date, only one study has been conducted on understanding why couples fall out of romantic love. Sailor's purposive sample (2013) revealed themes as central to the participant's experience of falling out of love including loss of trust, of intimacy, feeling loved, emotional pain, and negative sense of self over a gradual and progressive deterioration. In each of the eight participants who were interviewed, all had a pivotal moment of knowing. These experiences were diverse but the "clarity of the moment was universal" (Sailor, 2013, p. 13). Neurobiological studies suggest a complex relationship between stress and love.

Future research exploring this phenomenon more broadly and deeply might provide researchers and clinicians a better understanding of the complexities of this phenomenon. The extant literature suggests that the experience of love and falling out of love have physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. Moreover, there are individual and gender differences that must be taken into consideration when fostering recovery from the dissolution of significant relationships.

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Statement of the Problem

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The statement of the problem in a qualitative study provides a rationale for doing the study, based on the social cost of the omissions in the existing knowledge base (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Once a comprehensive literature review is conducted, the qualitative researcher generates a formal rationale for conducting the study based on what is notably missing from the current literature (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The rationale for the study is not just to address what is poorly understood about the phenomenon but also the moral issues associated with such

omissions. Thus, the statement of the problem is important because it raises the issue of moral praxis in research; it speaks to the social cost of omissions and who is most negatively affected by them (Glesne, 2016).

When I began looking in the published literature to identify research that might provide me with some insights into the experience of falling out of love with a romantic partner, I discovered one qualitative study examining the significance of this experience for individuals. The study was a retrospective study that looked at the experiences of individuals who had fallen out of romantic love leading to the dissolution of their marriages. It did not explore the experience of falling out of romantic love for individuals who were in long-term, non-marital relationships. Thus, expanding the literature to individuals who are not married may contribute new insights to our understanding of this phenomenon. There is some literature on what contributes to marital success and failure that is relevant to this study. This literature focuses on the interpersonal dynamics between partners. I also thought it might be valuable to explore the internal meaning making process during this process.

Sometimes people find participating in focused conversation about critical life experiences to be beneficial insofar as it gives them a chance to talk about things that matter to them. It was my hope that the same might be true for the participants of this study. I also hoped that participation might provide both participants with a better understanding of their own life stories, perhaps some greater clarity about the essence of that experience and what they had learned in their journey forward. It was also my sincere hope that the participation in this study might encourage and empower not only the participants in the study but other individuals who have experienced falling out of love with a partner, or for those whose partners fell out love with them.

At the beginning of looking in the published literature to identify research that might provide some insights into the process of falling out of love with a romantic partner, I was surprised to fine only one study that examined the significance of this experience for people. The study was a retrospective qualitative study that looked at the experiences of individuals who had been married; it did not explore the experiences of individuals who had been in long-term, non-marital relationships. I wondered whether the experiences of romantic love and falling out of romantic love might be different for individuals in non-marital relationships.

I was also interested in examining this experience from the perspective of men. Men are often characterized in the couples literature as reluctant participants in therapy and I felt like I did not have as much information about what their experiences of love might be.

Purpose of the Study

A statement of purpose captures the essence of a study and provides the reader with a comprehensive statement or general overview of the study's focus. This may include the intent, methodology, and identification of participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It describes the intent of the study, grounds it in a specific qualitative genre, discusses the central concept or idea, provides a general definition of the construct, and identifies the unit of analysis (Creswell, as cited in Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

A statement of purpose in a qualitative proposal attempts to frame the study in a way that conveys the emergent nature of qualitative inquiries. In order to capture the emic experience of participants, the researcher begins with a general structure and process, but once in the field must continue to refine and shape that process so it best captures the unfolding story of the participant (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative inquiries use a relational approach to research topics that do not have too much theory attached to them. The participants' words and perspectives become

the starting point of an inductive (bottom-up) approach to the study. The statement of purpose also helps the researcher frame how the data gathered in the field will be presented at the end of a study (e.g., as a narrative, as an emergent theory, as an evaluative summary) (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover the experience of falling out of romantic love from the perspective of unmarried, adult, heterosexual, American males, who were born and raised in Hawaiʻi, using a transcendental phenomenological design. For this study, two unmarried, heterosexual American males who were born and raised in Hawaiʻi, were interviewed to explore this experience. The result was a discussion of themes and patterns that emerged from our focused conversations on falling in and out of romantic love. At the outset of the study, *romantic love* was provisionally defined as having a deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual recognition and regard for the value of another person and relationship which might generate many powerful feelings (Grayson, 2001). The study was designed to focus on the participants' experiences of romantic love and falling out of love with a significant other.

Research Questions

A research question is one that identifies a phenomenon being studied and is the fundamental core of an investigation or study. It focuses an inquiry, determines the method being used, and guides the end analysis and report (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Developing a good research question is one of the first critical steps in the research process. This is because one of the most important skills to effectively learn in the field is how to ask meaningful and important questions. Rossman and Rallis (2017) state that the hallmark of a learning mind-set is asking researchable questions with potentially actionable answers. Research should be conducted with specific goals mind and in qualitative inquiries, these goals

should include guiding the conduct of the investigation and contributing to improving human circumstances (Glesne, 2016).

Research questions typically point to the specific methodology that may help to answer them. In this study, a phenomenological approach would be the best fit. Phenomenology is the study of participants' lived experiences and worldviews. It presumes that shared experiences have a structure and essence that can be described and captured in words (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). van Manen (1990) states that phenomenological interviews serve two purposes, including an opportunity to engage in a process for discovering and collecting experiential narrative material for a more profound grasp of human nature, and to serve as a means of developing a conversational relationship with the interviewee about the significance of his or her experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Phenomenological in-depth interviewing has received increasing attention in qualitative inquiry.

In this study, a postmodern version of phenomenological method known as the transcendental phenomenological method will be used. What distinguishes transcendental phenomenological method from earlier approaches to phenomenology is its focus on epoché or reflexively challenging the researcher's bias throughout the collection and analysis of data in order to capture a more emic perspective of participants, and its use of multiple, semi-structured interviews allowing the participants to lead the process of inquiry where they believe it will reveal what is most important to understand about the experience and meaning construction around a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

In a phenomenological study, *descriptive research questions* orient the researcher and interviewee to a specific experience of interest and explores participant's perceptions of what the phenomenon is. *Experiential research questions* focus on a person's accounts of his or her lived

experiences. *Process research questions* explore how the phenomenon unfolds or changes over time, and how meanings evolve or are constructed and reconstructed over time. *Meaning research questions* explore the significance or core meanings ascribed to a phenomenon in the context of the participant's lived experiences and reflections on those experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. Descriptive: What is the experience of falling out of romantic love for heterosexual adult American men, born and raised in Hawaiʻi?

2. Experiential: What critical events do heterosexual adult American men who were born and raised in Hawaiʻi consider central to their experience falling out of romantic love?

3. Process: How do adult American men, born and raised in Hawaiʻi, experience romantic love over the course of a relationship? How do they experience the process of falling out of romantic love?

4. Meaning/significance: What is the significance of being in romantic love with someone? What is the significance of falling out of romantic love?

Grand Tour Questions

Grand tour questions are used to facilitate participants in sharing their experiences. They are open-ended questions that translate research questions into conversation questions that invite participants to show researchers around their phenomenological space and give them a "grand tour" of their experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Rather than focusing on reproducible, statistically normative experiences, these questions attempt to capture participants' idiographic feelings, beliefs, intentions, prior behaviors, and affects, as well as the process involved in

constructing their meanings of the phenomenon. Researchers use grand tour questions to identify a few broad topics of interest that are then framed as open-ended questions that help uncover the participant's deeper meanings or perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The intent is to capture the greatest breadth and depth of experience possible in a particular context for a particular participant (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Grand tour questions are different than research questions because they avoid pursuing a particular agenda, feeling compelled to cover a set of pre-planned questions. Grand tour questions are designed to encourage participants Socratically toward confirmation of their own assumptions (Spradley, 1979). Unlike research questions, grand tour questions are led by the participant, rather than the researcher (Spradley, 1979). What should emerge is the voice of the participants rather than the etic interpretations of the researchers. The balance of the talk is in favor of what the participants think is important with respect to the phenomenon.

Some of the proposed grand tour questions used during focused conversations with the participants in this study were:

- **Descriptive**
  - What is love?
  - Let's start at the beginning—what was going on before you and your first romantic partner met?
  - Was this your first love?
    - (If "yes") How did that fit with what you imagined it would be like?
  - Tell me about your relationship with your ex?

- o If I were a fly on the wall in your past relationship, what would I observe going

  on between you and your partner when you were in love? How about when you

  fell out of love?

- o Couples research talks about how a lot of relationships start off as "fiery and

  passionate" and that this is what often gets associated with romantic love. (Does

  that fit for you? Or has your experience of romantic love been different?)

  Describe what it was like for you.

- **Experiential**

  - o Where did you get the idea that romantic love exists?

    - How was romantic love portrayed to you when you were young?

    - How was romantic love portrayed to you when you were in high school?

    - How have you seen romantic love portrayed as an adult?

  - o Tell me about the first time you fell in love?

    - (If there were others after this first love) How about the next time?

  - o How did you know that you were in love?

    - If a younger sister/brother came to you and asked, "How do you know if

      you're in love?" or "What is it like to be in love?" What would you say?

  - o How did you know that your love had died?

    - If a younger sister/brother came to you and asked, "How do you know if

      you're not in love anymore?" What would you say?

- **Process/change over time**

  - o Tell me about your journey as a couple to this point?

  - o How did you know you were in love?

- Sometimes, as time passes, people begin to worry that the relationship does not feel the same and they worry, "Am I still in love?"

    - Tell me what it was like in the beginning.

    - Tell me what it was like when you made the commitment.

    - Tell me about an experience you had as the relationship began to change.

    - Tell me about an experience you had that made you aware that you had fallen out of romantic love?

    - Can you give me an example of an experience that you had at that time?

- What happened that let you know that you were not in love anymore?

- What would need to happen before you could fall in love again?

- How would you know if you were falling in love again with your partner?

- **Meaning/significance**

    - Did the meaning of love change for you over the course of your relationship?

    - What would happen in your life if you had never fallen in love?

Significance of the Study

In discussing the topic, research problem, or issue, a researcher is implicitly or explicitly stating why doing this particular study is important and how it may contribute to society somehow (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is therefore mandatory for the therapist to consider how the utility of the study can be enhanced (Glesne, 2016). To do so, the researcher must consider how the study may contribute to scholarly research or literature, social policy issues, concerns of practice, or interests of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The statement of significance in a qualitative study, thus, examines who has interest in a specific domain of inquiry, how the

study will add to theory, policy and practice, and how it may be of specific benefit to the participants and the study's other potential stakeholders (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Qualitative inquiries are important because they allow one to talk in depth and assist the researcher to develop a stronger sense of a person's experience or understanding of a situation or phenomenon. Qualitative inquiries assist in creating and refining the extant theory and literature on a phenomenon. Therefore, while there is significance of what is found in the study, caution should be taken to not generalize it to the greater population. Quantitative inquiries would be necessary to explore the prevalence of some of these themes if we are to apply these findings to generalizable theory.

Key stakeholders and the potential audience for this study are members of helping professions working with clients who are experiencing falling out of love with their romantic partners. This study may be useful for clinical professionals as they may have more insight with helping their clients dealing with this phenomenon or understanding why their soon to be estranged partners are experiencing this phenomenon.

Sometimes people find participating in focused conversation about critical life experiences to be beneficial insofar as it gives them a chance to talk about things that matter to them. It is hoped that the same will be true for the participants. It is hoped that the participants' involvement in this study will help him gain a better understanding of his own life story, perhaps some greater clarity about what has helped within his healing process and what may have challenged this process. In addition, it is sincerely hoped that his participation in this study, and the subsequent data gathered, will encourage and empower individuals who have experienced falling out of love with their partner, or for those whose partners fell out love with them.

In my initial review of the published literature on the phenomenon of falling out of love with a romantic partner, I discovered only one published qualitative study that examined the significance of this experience for people. The study was a retrospective study that looked at the experiences of married individuals who reported having fallen out of romantic love. It did not look at individuals who were in long-term, non-marital relationships. It was hoped that the findings of this study might begin a process of expanding the literature on romantic love to include a greater understanding of how this experience might vary in the larger community of people. In particular, this study attempted to begin exploring the more poorly understood experiences of unmarried men, contributing to a more sensitive approach to these individuals in individual and couples work.

Further, the findings of this study might be especially helpful to family and couples' therapists. It may offer a unique opportunity to explore why romantic love is considered so important to clients, what contributes to its development, and what challenges its longitudinal survival.

CHAPTER II

APPROACH

[The field methodology of a qualitative inquiry is emergent. While it usually is congruent with the methodology as proposed, the researcher may discover nuances that would be helpful to share with other researchers who may want to conduct similar studies or would like greater context in which to assess the rigor of the study. The following chapter, presents the methodology of the study as proposed. Chapter III will examine the field methodology as implemented.]

Rationale for Use of Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative inquiry is a comprehensive method used to provide a depiction of structure, order, and patterns that may be found about some facet of the social world (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It helps to gain a deep understanding of a specific phenomenon rather than a shallow overview of a larger sample of a population. Qualitative inquiry is rooted in empiricism which suggests that knowledge is acquired by straightforward experience through the physical senses (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Because it is naturalistic and interpretive, it draws on a few methods of inquiry (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). One method qualitative research uses to collect data is observation, done by selecting and recording behaviors of people in their natural environment to generate in-depth descriptions. Qualitative research may use more subjective records from individuals that cannot otherwise be more directly observed and objectively and discretely quantified. Thus qualitative inquiry is, according to Rogers (as cited in Rossman & Rallis, 2017), "research that represents human beings as whole persons living in dynamic, complex social arrangements" (p. 6).

Quantitative and qualitative inquiries have often been contrasted as opposites of each other but this is a false dichotomy. Qualitative and quantitative inquiries are part of an interactive continuum between experience and emergent theories (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

There are differences between qualitative and quantitative inquiries, however. Qualitative inquiry is different from quantitative inquiry in it is formulated based on a more positivist view of science (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Quantitative inquiry emphasizes a reality independent of those who experience a phenomenon and assumes that reality can be defined objectively. Thus typically, quantitative inquiry is constructed to be free of any distortions that may be influenced by the researcher's bias being that the setting is in a controlled environment (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This, however, is by definition not absolutely possible in any form of research. Quantitative research uses a design that tests hypotheses about two or more related variables through experiments or correlations. It assumes that influences affecting these variables can be controlled by defining specific conditions. Quantitative research typically seeks outcomes that are thus measurable through numbers. In contrast, qualitative inquiry represents a more "interpretivist epistemology" that does not test a hypothesis or assume that the facets of reality being explored can be controlled, but described in its most natural form (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In the end, quantitative inquiries strive to predict, control, confirm descriptions, and test hypotheses while qualitative inquiries understand, describe, discover, and generate hypotheses (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

One of the defining purposes of qualitative research is how the transformation of data into information may be used. Since the results of a study may be used in different ways, the study should be designed with potential uses in mind. Rossman and Rallis (2017) suggest four ways in which qualitative inquiries may be used. These uses include instrumental, enlightenment, symbolic, and transformative uses (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

An instrumental use is when the research is applied to a particular problem or is used as a means of reaching a goal (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). An example of this might be to

qualitatively study how to determine what may need to be changed to improve work satisfaction for a group of employees.

A second potential use is enlightenment, contributing enhancements to our understanding and offering insights about a phenomenon. This means that information attained from research may be used as gaining a better comprehension that accumulates with a larger melting pot of other information about certain situations or phenomena. Thus, an enlightening use of research becomes a more indirect use of adding value to society. Rossman and Rallis (2017) describe how policy actions are decided through enlightenment uses of research. Instead of being clear-cut resolutions, policies are formed by incorporating values and beliefs that accumulate over time which can be discovered through the influence of research findings.

The third main use of qualitative inquiries is symbolic. This is used to help look for patterns, generate narratives, and assist in delivering new ways of articulating phenomena to make sense of the world (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). An example of this may be to describe and aid in the acceptance of a disability that was previously understood but perhaps from an etic perspective.

Lastly, transformative use is one that can alter some aspect of society and improve lives (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). An example of this may be to change a system which will improve the care delivered to patients in a psychiatric hospital. Research is important because the information acquired from these studies can serve humanity whether it is to make a decision, formulate a greater understanding of an issue, construe the meaning of an event, or create actions that may empower a population (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

This study will have an instrumental and enlightenment use, as therapists, and even the general population may come to understand some experiences around falling out of love. This

may aid practicing psychologists to better understand the range and complexities of their clients'
experiences, especially their male clients, with respect to relationship issues.

Specific Methodology

The phenomenological method is a form of inquiry that seeks to understand human
experience (Moustakas, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It can be used to explore and describe
shared or varied experiences and meaning making related to a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Through this method, it is presumed that the essential implication of the experience will
be exposed through dialogue and reflection (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Through a series of
reflexive conversations, the researcher and interviewees capture not only a description of the
phenomenon but the meaning of the experience of their lived experiences (Rossman & Rallis,
2017).

Transcendental phenomenological method focuses less on the interpretations of the
researcher and more on the description of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). It uses *epoché* (a
process of "bracketing" or managing the researcher's preconceptions) and semi-structured
inquiry to identify universal structures based on what and how people experience the
phenomenon of interest. The goal is to see phenomena through "unclouded glasses" (Moustakas,
1994; Sheehan, 2014, p. 1). This means that the investigator has to put away his or her own
experiences as much as possible and look at the client's experience with a fresh perspective
toward the phenomenon through the eyes of the participant (Moustakas, 1994). While this goal
is seldom achieved completely, the researcher strives to capture an emic portrayal that will
uncover new insights that are not fully captured by the extant knowledge of the phenomenon.

Transcendental phenomenological method is relevant for my research interest because
portraying the experience of love is a phenomenon that everyone perceives, experiences, and

interprets differently. Transcendental phenomenological method will allow participants to freely

explore the nuances of their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them.

Transcendental phenomenological research uses a semi-structured format that allows participants

to freely express themselves in the most transparent way possible. The grand tour questions used

during the focused conversations with the participants serve mainly as a catalyst. Once the

conversations begin, the participants will directs the process, showing the researcher what is

relevant to the essence of the phenomenon.

Role of the Researcher

Intersubjectivity and Reflexivity

In qualitative research, it is assumed that the researchers and participants mutually impact

each other during a study and thus the meanings that emerge from a study are constructed

collaboratively. This is referred to as *intersubjectivity* (Glesne, 2016). While it is acknowledged

that knowledge is socially constructed, though, the charge of the researcher in a qualitative study

is to capture the essence of participants' subjective experiences. This presents a challenge. It

acknowledges that the researcher seeks to capture an emic portrayal but that he or she cannot

fully remove himself or herself from the story. In order to capture a more emic understanding of

a phenomenon, the researcher tries to structure the process in a systematic and rigorous way that

attempts to minimize interpretations of the data that reflect the researcher's understandings over

those of the participants, especially those that are in conflict with those of the participants

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Participant-Observer Role

Observation is a systematic data collection approach that requires an examination in

naturally occurring situations. An observation involves extended engagement with mindful

notations of how the observing is done. To develop full understanding of the explored point of interest, methodical improvisation and flexibility should be utilized (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Participant observation is a type of observation that "combines participation of the lives of the people being studied with the maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data" (Fetterman, 1998, pp. 34-35).

This role acknowledges that there are both benefits and limitations posed by staying exclusively on one end of the participant-observer continuum, and that to move fluidly along a continuum between pure observer and pure participant is more effective in capturing emic experience. When the researcher occupies a position on the observer-as-participant (observer) end of the continuum, it provides him or her with a broad perspective of the phenomenon, but at the expense of understanding the emic experience or meaning construction taking place. If the researcher, however, occupies a position on the participant-as-observer (participant) end of the continuum, it provides him or her with an experience closer to the immediate experiences of the participant at the expense of risking "going native" or forgetting that he or she is not a member of the group being studied and that his or her experiences may not represent those of in-group members (Glesne, 2016). Overall, the participant observer role acknowledges that the researcher's impact on the study cannot be fully removed. It represents part of the important context of the study that must be continually examined and minimized.

Ethical Considerations and Responsibilities of the Qualitative Researcher

Ethics are the moral principles that govern an individual or group's behaviors and has to do with the feelings that tell them what is right and wrong. These moral principles provide the rules that tell people how to act in a given situation.

Relational ethics. Researching private lives and placing accounts in the public domain raise many ethical issues which sometimes cannot be solved only by rules, principles, or guidelines (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Most existing guidelines for ethical conduct of researchers is written from a more quantitative inquiry perspective. Qualitative research sometimes handles sensitive topics that can tender emotional and other risks to both participants and researchers. Data is collected with a focus on multifaceted narratives that provide descriptions of one's experiences. Thus, it is the researcher's ethical role to respect the privacy of the participant, establish honest and open interactions with appropriate boundaries, and avoid any form of misrepresentation of the data collected.

Ethics of consequences. There are four main categories of ethical theories that are especially important in conducting qualitative inquiries. The first category might be described as the *ethics of consequences* which is characterized by their focus on the outcomes of research. This type of ethics orients the goal or target that is assumed to be intrinsically good (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Although this category of ethical theories is often associated with the adage, "the end justifies the means," it should be noted that the means to achieve the end may not always be good. The ethics of consequences assume that the more prized the result, or consequence, the greater the range of means allowed. Specific utilitarian ethical responsibilities encountered as a researcher for this study include trying to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of falling out of romantic love in order to better understand the complexities of this lived experience, as no one form of romantic love fits any generalizable description perfectly.

Ethics of individual rights and responsibilities. Another category of ethical theories include those that focus on the *ethics of individual rights and responsibilities.* These theories consider the fundamental rights of an individual and the fundamental responsibility of

researchers to protect those rights. These theories are reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative which assumes that there are universal rights. These fundamental rights include the rights of free consent, privacy, freedom of conscience, free speech, and due process (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In qualitative studies, it is important that the rights of the participant be protected and that participants fully understand these rights. Thus, in this study, a thorough informed consent will be given and reviewed prior to the study being conducted. Some of the specific categorical ethical responsibilities that need to be considered in this study include a fully informed consent from the participant, privacy, and the security of the data.

Ethics of social justice. Adhering to relational ethical principles enhances the validity by deepening trust and authenticity in the researcher and participant's exchanges. This is especially important given the power differential between researcher and participants. The *ethics of social justice* (also known as *critical ethics*) require the researcher to make a positive contribution to the well-being of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Critical ethics requires the utmost care in specification and design to avoid errors in a researcher's implementation, while using techniques in a responsible manner. If critical ethics are not implemented, the consequences will be at best unprofessional and at worst disastrous. This may be compounded by the power differential between the researcher and participants. Some of the specific critical ethical responsibilities anticipated having to consider in this study includes ensuring that those participating in the story are protected. Their rights supersede those of the intellectual community. This means that the participants may see the results of the study, and also that the information is conveyed in a very appropriate and professional manner.

Ethics of care. The *ethics of care*, also known as *covenantal ethics*, focus on participants' needs in any given moment. They emphasize "concrete circumstances over abstract

principles" and the moral interdependence of people (Goodyear, 2014, p. 220). Rossman and Rallis (2017) assert that "care theory, with its emphasis on relationships, can connect principles and context, providing a practical guide for making moral decision" (p. 71). Arguably, if a commitment to trustworthiness is highlighted amongst researchers along with the empowerment of participants, participants will then in turn trust researchers and disclose what is more meaningful to them which can in turn enhance the study. Some of the specific covenantal ethical responsibilities anticipated in this study include making sure that participants understand their rights, that they be included as collaborators in the study, and that they have the power to decline questions, and correct the researcher's interpretations of their experience as they see fit.

Fully informed consent. In qualitative inquiries, the participant is cast into a very different role than in quantitative or positivistic inquiries. In qualitative inquiries, the role of the respondent is one of agency, self-determination, participation in the analysis and reconstruction of his or her social world, and collaboration in the processes and construction of the products of inquiry (Glesne, 2016). This introduces a very different perspective to the discourse on the ethical responsibilities to and role relationship between the researcher and participant which is reflected in the guidelines utilized by many professional groups that do extensive fieldwork.

A central ethical principle in research is that participants have a comprehensive knowledge of the risks and benefits from their involvement and choose to be participants at will. Worth noting is that full disclosure can pose special problems for the researcher since it may alter the participant's behavior and what is ultimately revealed in the study. This may take away from the full nature of what the researcher is trying to discover. Withholding information during the session followed by a debrief session is a common solution. Deception, however, can have

mixed results in a qualitative inquiry. This is an important consideration in not only the ethics but rigor of qualitative studies.

In most research studies, consent decrees have tended to be very formal and distancing, often using jargon and academic language that is relatively unfamiliar to the majority of participants (Glesne, 2016). In qualitative inquiry, the informed consent procedure attempts to minimize the power differential that is inherent in researcher (Glesne, 2016). Informed consents should be clear and the language must be understandable to all participants, which is generally written so that someone with an 8th grade language may comprehend it. It is important to acknowledge that the researcher is both inviting and requesting permission to learn from the participants. Further, it is highly recommended that a lay summary be developed, rather than presenting only an abbreviated form of the informed consent to participants. A lay summary would include the verbatim script for the consent protocol presented to each participant. This will allow participants to have a more detailed description of the study to reference over time (Glesne, 2016).

The informed consent protocol for this study includes a discussion that clarifies my role relationship with the participant, including the difference between a clinician and participant-observer, limitations of the relationship, and justification for this structure (see Appendix F). Participants will be encouraged to engage in mental health treatment with their therapists or psychologists throughout the course of this study. Resources within the community including both clinics and licensed clinical psychologists who specialize in couples or systemic therapy will be shared during the informed consent (see Appendix H). The initial informed consent form for this study also includes contact information for my Clinical Research Project (CRP) Committee Chair, Dr. Joy Tanji (who will be supervising my work), and Dr. Helen Turner (Chair

of Chaminade University of Honolulu Institutional Review Board). Participants may contact them if they have questions about their rights or concerns about how I am conducting the study.

Confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality means that the identity is known to the researcher but protected from public exposure. Confidentiality is an ethical concern. A researcher's essential commitment is to guard a participant's right to privacy by ensuring that matters disclosed to another will not be relayed to others without the informed consent of the participants. The need to protect participants is the most apparent in research. Since this study will be focused on gaining an understanding of the participant's experiences, which may unintentionally trigger a sense of vulnerability, it is imperative to protect the participants' anonymity.

I intend to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants throughout the length of the study. Precautions made to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants begin during any type of interaction between participants and the participant-observer. This means conducting interviews in a remote location, with a private room that has sound proof walls and doors that can be closed and locked is important to ensure basic safety and confidentiality. In the event the room is not soundproof or voices can be heard from another room, the participants will be asked about their comfortability and desire to choose another location before continuing. In addition, potential issues that may jeopardize a participant's confidentiality include the use of Skype or FaceTime to conduct the interviews. When such platforms are used, confidentiality and privacy may be compromised since video chats may not be as secure as face-to-face interviews. While this is improbable, it is recognized that computer hackers may be able access a Skype or FaceTime interview. This possibility will be discussed with participants during the informed consent process.

In addition, because participants' demographic information are disclosed to provide thick and rich data, there is the possible risk that a participants' identities may be able to be determined, despite my best efforts to protect their identity. To minimize this risk, the participants' real names will not appear on any transcript or the draft or final write-up. Extra efforts will be made to keep the participants' identifying information out of published reports. Information that will remain a secret include names, places, and details that may risk revealing who the participants are.

The best way to ensure those interviewed or observed will not be embarrassed by the study is to remove all identifying information immediately after it is being tabulated. In addition, a pseudonym will be used to protect the identity of the participants of the study throughout the interview process. This is directly linked to the ethical principle of doing no harm.

There are some limits with respect to participants' rights to confidentiality; circumstances in which the participants' rights to confidentiality may need to be breached. The participants' confidentiality will at all times be protected, as the law requires with the exceptions: 1) Report of imminent suicidal or homicidal intent; 2) Report of abuse of vulnerable populations (children, elders, and/or individuals with mental or physical disabilities) will be reported to the proper authorities; and 3) If the materials from this study are subpoenaed by the court of law. In these instances, my CRP Chair, Dr. Joy Tanji, will be notified.

The limits of confidentiality are in place to protect the participants' safety and the safety of others, which are of utmost importance to this researcher. Although these limits are set forth to protect the safety of the participant and others, the participants should not be deceived. They

will thus be informed of this limit and a written acknowledgement of understanding limit will be recorded during the informed consent.

While it is the researcher's main goal to maintain confidentiality during the data collection and analysis phase, anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed. This is because in a close-knit community like Hawai'i, the participants' stories may be identified by individuals who are close to them. Despite great efforts to protect the anonymity of both participants, another individual in the community may recognize their identity when reading the study's results. During the consent procedure, each participant will be asked to select a pseudonym for himself, to be used throughout the study. During discussions with other individuals on the research team, in transcriptions, and all write-ups, this pseudonym will be used instead of the participant's actual name. In addition, if the participants are encountered in the community, they will not be approached. However, if the participants choose to approach and acknowledge the researcher, every effort will be made to keep the conversation cordial but at a minimum, making no reference to the study or their involvement with the study.

The informed consent will provide in detail what will be disclosed in this study (themes and narratives of their experience of falling out of romantic love), what will remain a secret (identifying information), and the criteria necessary for evaluation. Informing the participants of these measures will provide a safe environment for the participants which will allow them to engage in deep exploration throughout the study. In addition, informing the participants of the limits to confidentiality will notify them of my duty as a mandated reporter and precautionary actions required if safety becomes a concern.

Voice and interpretive authority. Interpretive authority in phenomenological studies lies in the hands of participants. In positivistic studies, that power typically lies in the hands of

the researcher. Interpretive authority refers to who will be given the power to interpret and translate the lived experiences and perspectives of participants in a study. The question is: who has the "true" or "correct" version of the participant's narrative (Carl & Ravitch, 2016)? Qualitative inquiries assume that there is not a singular reality or truth to a lived experience and that there is inherent power in all forms of research that must be shared. Participants, therefore, will have the right to review the researcher's work, edit, add, or remove any copy that is sensitive or inaccurate. In order to respect participants, researchers must acknowledge the opinions and choices of research participants. Allowing them to voice their opinion and own their story gives them autonomy and empowers them to make decisions concerning their own actions and wellbeing (Carl & Ravitch, 2016).

Security of data. The informed consent will include: how data will be stored and secured; who will have access to the information and why (identities of my debriefer, peer examiner, CRP committee chair and committee member, and a brief description of their roles), how long information will be stored, and how the findings will be disseminated. The participants will be informed that their identities will be protected as their narratives will be transcribed directly by this researcher, or a third party transcription service (participant's consent required for use of a service) that will uphold the same level of ethical rigor in the handling of documents throughout the study. The participant will be informed that this study will be published and placed in circulation as part of the Chaminade University of Honolulu Sullivan Family Library collection. It may also be presented at a conference, in which case the participants will be consulted with regard to what specifically will be presented. To ensure the anonymity of the participant, all raw data will be locked on a password protected hard drive and

will be discarded after completion of Clinical Research Project requirements, no later than July 24, 2022.

Ownership and proprietorship. The informed consent includes information regarding ownership and proprietorship, too. It provides a detailed account of who owns the products of the research, who the guardian of the data will be, who will have access to this data, and how the data will be secured especially while the researcher is in the field. Because the study will be based on narratives of the participants' experiences of falling out of love, the raw data will solely be seen by the researcher and her supervisors (who will provide methodological consultation and peer examine my coding of these materials). The data will be secured on a localized hard drive and locked in a secure setting during times when not actively being used. Participants will be informed that the researcher will remain the proprietor or guardian of the data for three years after completion of the study, or until July 24, 2022, in case other researchers have questions or challenge the findings. This transparency contributes to participant understanding of where the individual's stories will go, who will have guardianship of the data, and for what amount of time. This will inform them of the risks that come with participating in this study, further informing and honoring their autonomy.

Rights of the participant. An agreement will be made with the participant to meet at a centrally located site that provides both privacy and a quiet setting for rapport building and enhancing audio recording quality. The informed consent protocol will include a request for the participants' permission to audio record conversations and use verbatim quotes to illustrate themes that emerge during the study. The participants will be reassured that they will retain the right to review the narrative construction of their stories and the quotes believed to best illustrate the main themes in their stories.

Participants of the study will have the right to withdraw at any time without cause or concern about negative consequences from the researcher and Chaminade University of Honolulu (Appendix F). Participants will be informed that they have the right to delay answering or waive questions they do not feel comfortable addressing throughout the study. In the event a participant experiences distress or overwhelmed during the study, the participant and researcher will discuss how to proceed. The participants will be informed that in such a situation, the researcher will consult with her clinical research project committee as well. Further, participants have the right to speak off the record. Anything discussed off the record will not be audio taped unless the participant repeats the same information on the record later. The audio recording device will be turned off if a participant requests a break or to speak off the record. No notes will be written during these situations. The recording device will only be turned back on once given the okay by the participant. The participants will be informed when recording will begin and end. A script for what will be said in these instances is included in the appendices (Appendix J). This procedure is important as it upholds the respect for the participant as it gives them the autonomy to terminate their participation whenever they want without repercussions.

The final consent (the second part of the two-part consent) and release of information protocol will be finalized only after the participant has had a chance to review the researcher's work, making sure the researcher recreated the participant's story with fidelity. It is assumed that at the beginning of a qualitative inquiry, a participant cannot make an informed decision about what he will disclose to the researcher. It is only after the participant has a chance to review the drafted narrative that he will be able to determine whether the emic perspective is being represented appropriately and make an informed decision about release of information.

Purposive Sampling and Bounding of the Study

One of the key components of a study is getting meaningful data. Without this, the inquiry becomes superficial and impressionistic at best. Thus, an appropriate sampling strategy should be used to best achieve the intents of the study. In qualitative inquiries purposive rather than randomized, stratified sampling is used. Specific people within a population with an intimate, lived experience of the phenomenon are chosen for a study. This is different from the approach to sampling used in quantitative inquiries in which the researcher attempts to identify a representative sample that reflects the demographic characteristics of a larger population (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This difference reflects the difference in intent between positivistic and interpretivist research paradigms.

The rationale for using purposive sampling in a qualitative inquiry is that it seeks to include participants who can help uncover the social phenomenon's complexity, instead of assessing a generalized experience. Thus, participants who have the most direct, experientially-derived knowledge of the phenomenon of interest are selected with the intent of uncovering nuanced understandings of the phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Achieving more breadth and depth, however, requires significant resources. Thus, qualitative researchers use small n-sizes to generate provisional models of social phenomena (Patton, 2002).

There are many different case selection methods used to identify a purposive sample. For the purposes of this study, though, quota case selection will be used. This is a criterion-based purposive sampling method in which variations of patterns are selected for examination (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 2002). The principle behind this type of sampling is to increase opportunities to uncover a broader and deeper understanding of the phenomenon in order to enhance future theory and research development.

I plan to identify two participants, 18 years or older, who were born and raised in Hawai'i and who vary on a number of attitudinal and worldviews. In particular, I would like to begin the process of theory building by identifying one participants who vary in upbringing (intact/divorced family), belief in marriage, collectivistic/individualistic worldview, and relational history since falling out of love (seeking a committed relationship, casually dating). Because of the rich intersectionality (intersecting diversity factors impacting social identity) in Hawai'i, I would like to begin this process of discovery by exploring these differences as they impact the experiences of two very different relationship histories among men falling in and out of love in Hawai'i.

In order to identify a quota sample, I plan to use snowballing or network sampling. This approach is used to identify potential cases of interest by asking each subsequent participant or informant to name other potential participants or information-rich cases. It is typically used to identify hidden populations (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 2002). In addition to network case selection, as a back-up strategy, a protocol for utilizing gatekeepers has been established in which mental health providers might be approached. An agreement form regarding the roles and ethical provisions set up to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants has been generated. The gatekeeper will be given a letter that provides a brief introduction to the study and the researcher's contact information if they have an interest in participating or want more information about the study.

Once the study has been approved by the Chaminade University of Honolulu's Institutional Review Board, network sampling will begin. Once identified, the participants' interests in the study will be confirmed and the informed consent process will begin. In the event one of them decides to no longer participate, the other participant will be asked if he knows

anyone who meets the inclusion criteria for the study, but has very different experiences and perspectives of falling out of love. This strategy is referred to as snowballing or network sampling. It is used to identify a hidden population by asking informants or each participant to recommend potential information-rich cases that may help further the researcher's exploration of the complexity of the phenomenon (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 2002).

Since the extant literature has tended to focus on married couple's experiences of falling out of love, I would like to broaden the scope of knowledge in this area by selecting participants who are not married. In addition, since the extant literature has tended to explore the experiences of heterosexual women, I would like to explore the experiences of heterosexual men. In particular, I would like to examine the experiences of two, adult (18 years or older), unmarried, heterosexual American men who were born and raised in Hawai'i, and who have experienced falling in and out of love with a significant other. For this study, the term *being in love* will be provisionally defined as having a deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual recognition and regard for the value of another person and relationship which may generate many powerful feelings (Grayson, 2001). By focusing attention on very distinct criteria, it is hoped that the data gathered will be thick and rich enough to see common themes and develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of falling out of romantic love.

Data Collection and Analysis

Pre-Entry

Long before entering the field, the qualitative researcher prepares. Effective entry or rapport requires consideration of how that entry can be done in the most sensitive and respectful way.

Gatekeeper. Prior to entering the field, it is helpful for a qualitative researcher to consider where to begin the search for the purposive sample. Purposive sampling requires selecting an individual who has an intimate knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Glesne, 2016). One of the questions in beginning a study is determining if the assistance of gatekeepers will be needed? The nature of one's relationship with gatekeepers can impact one's access to the phenomenon and its participants. Gatekeepers typically protect the safety of participants from outsiders. Even if one knows potential gatekeepers, informants and participants, the quality of information gathered during a study is highly dependent on relational ethics (Glesne, 2016). Because the topic of this study is relatively commonly experienced, gatekeepers will not be necessary. For this study, the researcher will seek men who have experienced romantic love and falling out of romantic love with these significant others. At this stage in the research process, *romantic love* will be provisionally defined as having a deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual recognition and regard for the value of another person and relationship which may generate many powerful feelings (Grayson, 2001).

Review of biases. A review of biases includes a specific acknowledgement of the researcher's theoretical, methodological, and personal biases; a discussion of how these biases may impact the study; and a provisional action plan regarding how biases will be challenged or minimized during and between conversations (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This discussion is updated throughout the study in order to refine the process and to identify additional biases that may emerge during the course of the study. It can be used by the researcher, debriefer, and peer examiner throughout the study to generate questions that enhance researcher reflexivity relative to areas of potential biases.

A review of biases is important because it captures the participant's story with emic accuracy. The process of reviewing and challenging biases on a regular basis support investigation of alternative plausible hypotheses about the phenomenon. This process is important for rigor (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It contributes to the reliability of the study because it allows the researcher to be conscious of how his or her filter impedes additional entry and access to better immersion and understanding of a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It helps a researcher go deeper and be better attuned to themes they did not expect to see or hear.

Entry

Qualitative inquiries are essentially cultural studies and thus the researcher must enter the scene with respect and sensitivity. Instead of conducting an experiment, the researcher is there to learn and gain a phenomenological and emic understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Therefore, researchers are not to judge or study a participant's experiences as though they are specimens (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Entry begins once the researcher contacts and establishes an initial alliance with gatekeepers, informants, and participants and becomes an ongoing process throughout the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Entry is conceptualized in qualitative inquiry as an ongoing process that enables the establishment and maintenance of the researcher's rapport with and participant rapport (Moustakas, 1994). Rapport is facilitated by interaction style, way of thinking, and ability to affectively experience the other's story (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Interpersonal skills, sensitivity to, and awareness of potential ethical concerns can also significantly enhance a study's entry (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Sometimes, entry may be content- or context-specific. Therefore, various rapport levels may be required to elicit several types of information in various settings (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The greater the rapport, the more the quality of sharing

authentically. In addition, the greater the descriptive specificity elicited, the more quickly

theoretical saturation may be achieved (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

When backyard research is conducted, the researcher should remember that despite past

relationships with gatekeepers, informants, and participants in the study, the researcher is now in

a complex relationship with these participants. Thus, the researcher and participant will interact

in new ways that reflect this change and exhibit role-related behaviors.

Informed consent. For this study, a two-part informed consent protocol has been

created and is presented in this IRB application packet (see Appendix F and Appendix G). The

two-part informed consent will include what will be asked of the participant; clearly request

approval for audio recording and notetaking to ensure accuracy to the participant's narratives;

and provide contact information for the researcher, the researcher's supervisor or Clinical

Research Proposal (CRP) chair, and IRB chair in case the participant (18 years or older) may

have any questions or concerns about the study. Each participant will review the consent forms

before the first meeting so that he has time to read, contemplate, and more fully understand what

he is consenting to as part of his participation in this study. During the first meeting, a thorough

discussion of forms will occur in addition to reviewing the consent forms in detail, answering

any questions the participant may have.

Specific topics discussed in the initial informed consent protocol includes confidentiality

and anonymity (and how this will be done), what participation will involve, the participant's

rights, proprietorship, security of the data, interpretive authority or privilege, what will be done if

the participant experiences discomfort or distress during the study, potential benefits and risks of

participation, ownership, role relationship, dissemination of the findings, ethical responsibilities

as a process, and due process.

If the participant becomes overwhelmed, the interview will be stopped, recording will be halted, debrief the participant, and the participant will be encouraged to contact his or her mental health providers. The participants will be asked to provide emergency contact information will be during the initial informed consent process. This information will be used only in the event that the participant becomes ill or distressed and is unable to contact this party on his own. At the initial informed consent, a Community Resource List including contact information from Oʻahu mental health clinics, the Honolulu Crisis Hotline, and licensed clinical psychologists who specialize in couples or systemic therapy will be shared during the informed consent (Appendix H). This list will be referred to in subsequent meetings as needed.

As part of the informed consent process, the participant will be informed and consent to complete a form indicating who to contact in the event of an emergency (see Appendix I). Examples of emergencies include the participant becoming sick and is unable to contact assistance. In the event the emergency contact needs to be contacted, the participant is informed that the nature of the participant's relationship to the researcher in this study will be kept confidential from his emergency contact person.

Immersion. Participation can be illustrated as a continuum that ranges from co-participation to immersion as a participant (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The degree of a researcher's participation is typically shaped by design decisions of what is possible or ethically appropriate (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is important to note that the degree of participation can both facilitate or hinder data collection. While at times it may be useful for a researcher to participate in a study, it may make it awkward or prevent one from collecting data (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). For example, immersion may enable the researcher to learn a specialized language or community's norms which may "yield a deep emic understanding than simply observing"

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 131). However, a researcher may also stand out and it may delay the process as one is trying to be accepted as part of the group. In the field, researchers may have to sacrifice collecting data as they engage in what they perceive as complicated or eccentric, or unnecessary entry effort, but is important to gaining the trust of potential participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Immersion brings immense value to a study. Long-term immersion in a setting is particularly necessary for a researcher to discover and interpret "the patterned meaning of organizational or collective life" (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 83). Central to ethnographic or qualitative study is the concept of culture. Culture is a complex concept that defines the way things are and proposes reasons for behaviors. A culture captures a group's shared beliefs and values which guide their behaviors and understandings of those actions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative researchers often concentrate meticulously on face-to-face interactions of members of a cultural group because they are interested in understanding how interactions shape the meaning of a setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The work used to study these groups or communities requires immersion. In the field, many researchers conduct "compressed ethnographies" which apply questions and techniques to gather data (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 84). Gathering data typically relies on observations, formal and informal interviews, interpretations of artifacts and the researcher's own experience of events and process (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

I plan to conduct three, one to one-and-a-half hour interviews with each of the two participants, and one member check to allow each participant an opportunity to review the narrative I construct from their stories. This is to allow sufficient time to support rapport building and immersion without overburdening them.

Constant Comparative Analysis

Constant comparative analysis identifies, refines, and contrasts analytic categories to generate mid-level theory to explain the phenomenon of interest in a study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This approach uses inductive reasoning to identify patterns, themes, and categories in the data that will allow me to shape the semi-structured inquiries in such a way as to best capture the participants' experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Data collection and analysis will be conducted simultaneously and in iterative cycles. Each in-depth interview will explore the phenomenon a little more deeply and each cycle of analysis will enhance the researcher's theoretical sensitivity and immersion (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Simultaneous data collection and analysis addresses what was unexpectedly found in the field and refines data gathering/analysis approaches to stay closer to the participant's story (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In addition, it allows the researcher to assess his or her impact on the participants and phenomenon under study and to act in ways that minimize this impact (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Conducting iterative and simultaneous data collection and analysis further allows the researcher to use his or her intuitions or hunches to inform the emergent method (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Collaboration. After entry, the goal is to establish a strong, cooperative relationship with each participant. It is important to regularly check in with each participant throughout this process, informing him of new themes that have emerged, additional questions that have come up during consultations with the peer debriefer or peer examiner, and constantly ensuring that the participant's narrative is correctly understood.

Semi-structured interviews. Data collection in transcendental phenomenological studies rely heavily on in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing is

often used when a researcher predicts that he or she may not get more than one chance to interview a participant or when several interviewers are being used to collect the data for a study. It provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers to gain reliable, comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The benefit of using semi-structured interviews are the open-ended questions that are used to follow relevant topics that may stray from the initial grand tour questions but still provide an opportunity to identify new ways of understanding the topic (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews provides reliable, comparable data while allowing informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In the case of this study, semi-structured interviews are being used to allow participants maximal authority with respect to uncovering what is meaningful to share about their experiences of falling out of romantic love.

Three (3) semi-structured interviews and one (1) member check will be conducted per participant for this study. The number of interviews will be limited to respect the participants' time and resources as well as what I, as a researcher, can realistically accomplish with the given time and resources I have to complete the project.

During the first interview, initial grand tour questions will be used to start the process of exploring the participants' stories. From this point forward, mini-tour questions will be used to follow each participant's lead and clarify or deepen exploration of their narratives. This method will give each participant the opportunity to direct and structure the process of exploration, while allowing sufficient flexibility to attain what is significant and most meaningful about experiences as they relate to the topic.

Risks. The researcher will assure working closely with the participant throughout the process to minimize any major risks. This process privileges the participant in terms of direction and pace. Nevertheless, discussing firsthand experiences may sometimes bring up unexpected memories that could be distressing. The remembrance and experience of intense feelings associated with these experiences may be painful and possibly unresolved.

Should this happen, the researcher will stop the interview, turn off the audio recorder, and take time off the record to better understand what is coming up for the participant. If the participant desires, the researcher will then support him in determining what is the most supportive way to attend to these concerns. A script addressing these issues will be used to temporarily stop the process and turn off the audio recording (see Appendix J). This may include ending the interview for the day and reconvening at a later date. This will allow the participant to process what came up, and/or engage in self-care. Should the participant want to speak off the record to process what has unexpectedly emerged in the conversation, he will be reminded that he has the right to discuss anything off the record. This means the information will not be included as part of the study unless he chooses to share it again at a later date when the recorder is on. The participant may also at any time decide to withdraw from the study without having to provide a reason or be concerned about negative consequences from the researcher or Chaminade University of Honolulu.

The participant will also be encouraged to contact his mental health provider if he currently has one. This will be determined during the initial informed consent protocol (see Appendix F). In the event the participant does not have a mental health provider, this researcher will make recommendations for providers that may be a good fit. The researcher will give each participant a Community Resource List (see Appendix H) which will include additional

resources for support in caring for his mental and emotional wellbeing. Efforts to ensure participants' welfare, above all else, is most important to this researcher.

Following the conclusion of an interview in which the circumstances described above occur, this researcher will contact her research committee members (Dr. Joy Tanji and Dr. Ricky Trammel) to consult and explain what happened. A follow-up call later that day would be made to the participant from the researcher directly, and then over the course of the following few days to ensure the participant's safety and wellbeing. The researcher will revisit and discuss the Community Resource List provided to the participant during the initial consent protocol or his mental health provider (see Appendix I). If he experiences severe emotional distress at all during the study, even if unrelated to the interview content, this researcher will pause the interview(s) and resume only when the participant feels he has recovered sufficiently enough to make an informed decision about continuing his participation.

Participants in distress will be reminded of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without cause or fear of negative consequences with the researcher or Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu.

Limits of confidentiality. Throughout these interviews, the confidentiality of participants will be protected at all times, as the law requires, with the following exceptions: the researcher is required by law to inform appropriate authorities if there is reasonable suspicion a child, elder, or dependent adult has been abused, or if the participant expresses suicidal or homicidal intent. In such situations, the proper authorities (i.e., the police, child welfare services at 1-808-832-5300 for Oahu, or adult protective services at 1-800-371-7897) will be contacted. In addition, my CRP Chair, Dr. Joy Tanji and CRP Committee Member, Dr. Ricky Trammel will be consulted regarding how to proceed if any of these safety issues arise.

Data management. It is important to practice good management skills for keeping the data organized and accessible. Data management will occur as it facilitates analysis, whether done concurrently or serially following data collection (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Data can be managed by ensuring a log of emergent themes and field notes is kept. These field entries will be completed within a day of each contact with a participant to reduce reconstruction bias, and to inform future directions of the study. Reconstruction bias may cause false interpretations or documentation (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Data management strategies can be used to help researchers return to the field before completing transcription and microanalysis, too. The researcher can enhance this process by generating running codes; listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and jotting down emergent themes (Glesne, 2016). Transcription, auditing, and microanalysis can then proceed on a lag. The emergent themes can be organized and then discussed with the researcher's peer debriefer. This can provide the researcher with a preliminary sense of where he or she has rich data and areas requiring further exploration.

Audiotaping. Video recordings will not be used in this study. However, with the participants' permission, audio recordings will be made and used in the study to more precisely gather data for the narrative construction of the participant's stories. If a participant is living in another state from the researcher, audio recordings may also be gathered via Skype, FaceTime, or phone, with the participants' permission prior to and during online or phone interviews. During face-to-face, online, or phone interviews, participants will be informed when they are being audio recorded and when the recorder is being turned off. Permission to record will be obtained before recording begins. The recorder will then be turned on and the participant will be

notified that recording has begun. Permission to record the participant's responses will be documented in writing during the initial informed consent procedure (see Appendix J).

Participants will also have the right to speak off the record (anything discussed off the record will not be transcribed directly into the transcribed narrative). The protocol for this will be that the audio recording device may be turned off when asked (with no notes being written), and such device will only be turned back on once given the okay (see Appendix J).

Transcription and auditing. Verbatim transcriptions of the audio recorded interviews will be generated and an audit for accuracy will be conducted by a peer examiner. Currently, the plan is for this researcher to transcribe all of the interview recordings to uphold the same level of ethical rigor in the handling of documents throughout the study. If, however, the researcher is unable to complete the transcriptions in a timely manner, another transcriptionist or an outside third party transcription service will be used. If such a service is used, steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality and security of the data in order to maintain the same ethical standards. This includes splicing personal and identifying information from the audio clips such as but not limited to names, places, and dates. The participant's consent will be required in order to use a third-party service for transcription. The participant will receive a copy of the service's Terms of Services and Privacy. If, for whatever reason, the participant does not feel comfortable with the transcription service that is selected (i.e., there is a conflict of interest where confidentiality is concerned), another transcription service will be identified and the participants' consent will be requested again.

The primary investigator will personally audit or check the accuracy of the transcriptions against the audio recordings. In addition to checking the accuracy of the transcriptions, the researcher will keep a running account of the process of transcription and auditing in her field

journal. In addition, data, findings, interpretations, methodological recommendations, and confirmation of the results will be examined to ensure it is supported by data and is internally logical.

Security of data. The audio recording will be transcribed by the researcher immediately after each interview in a very private and quiet space to ensure best sound quality and accuracy. The computer used to type the data and write-up will be password protected and verbatim transcriptions will be saved on a password-protected data storage device such as an external drive or USB. Confidentiality will be upheld and participation in the study will be kept classified by removing any identifying information throughout the study. A pseudonym will be used when referring to each participant. When not in use, audio recordings and transcriptions, along with data analyses and field notes, will be placed in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher has the key.

The researcher's CRP committee chair, CRP committee member, peer examiner, and peer debriefer, will have limited access to the audio recordings and transcripts. They will have access to these documents in order to fulfill their required roles during the study outlined in the methodology section above. They will be instructed, though, not to keep copies of any documents once they have completed this process.

The password-protected documents generated in this study will remain on the data storage device during the study for the requisite three years following conclusion of the project as required by the Chaminade University of Honolulu IRB. The records will be deleted on July 24, 2022. Until the recordings and electronic device are no longer needed, they will be stored in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. The password protected electronic storage device will be

transported in a locked box. Access to the password protected electronic storage device, locked

box, and filing cabinet will be limited to the researcher.

Peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is an important strategy employed by qualitative

researchers to ensure the collection of valid information. A peer debriefer is a person who serves

as a methodological "watchdog" for the researcher as design decisions are modified, analytic

categories are developed, or when an explanation for a phenomenon of interest is created

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017). During this study, the peer debriefer will be consulted after each

interview with a participant to support the researcher's reflexive process during methodological

consultation before, during, and after data collection. Discussions include emerging hypotheses,

observations, conceptualizations, methodological challenges, and biases that may arise. The

process allows the researcher to work together with one or more several colleagues who hold

impartial views of the study and determine if interpretation was done objectively (Rossman &

Rallis, 2017). Through this process, peers may detect different problems in the research such as

over- or under-emphasized points, vague descriptions, general errors, or biases and assumptions

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017). My CRP Committee Chair, Dr. Joy Tanji, will serve as this project's

methodological consultant, providing backup debriefing and peer examination throughout the

study. (See discussion of peer examination below.) This process will be employed to enhance

reflexive rigor in the study.

Coding. When the researcher has more resources, it is preferable to complete a

microanalysis of the emergent data before returning to the field, rather than coding by document

first and completing microanalysis on a lag. This provides a more nuanced understanding of the

participant's stories and supports greater saturation of the data over time.

A three-step coding process will be used to code the transcriptions. In each stage, themes that remain close to the phenomenology of the participant will be identified (Moustakas, 1994). The process of coding officially begins with phenomenological reduction or deconstructing the interview data into smaller meaning units. This process is sometimes referred to as *horizontaling* (a process in which each theme is treated as having equal value) (Moustakas, 1994). *Bracketing* (minimizing the impact of the researcher's own biases on the formation of these meaning units) will be carried out throughout the coding process (Moustakas, 1994). Repetitive or overlapping statements will be eliminated which will help distill out the horizons (textural meanings and invariant constituents of prevalence).

The resulting coding list will then be clustered into related categories using imaginative variation. Imaginative variation may reveal typologies of dimensions and properties, or processes of change related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The last step in the coding process involves synthesizing the meanings and essence of the participant's experience from their perspective. The data will be continuously clustered into more and more inclusive themes until it converges into a central meaning of the experience of falling out of romantic love. Over time, the thematic findings will become theoretically saturated; the emergent coding strategy will become thick and rich and the data gathered will provide fewer and fewer new themes. This is referred to as synthesis in transcendental phenomenological method (Moustakas, 1994). Throughout the coding process, the researcher will attempt to remain close to the wording and meanings of the participants. Low-inference codes help the researcher maintain the emic qualities of the participants' stories (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Peer examination. Following the completion of each cycle of coding, the peer examiner will meet with the researcher to support curious elaboration, provide clarification, and explore the coding strategy. The examiner's role is to closely examine the fit between the field data and emerging codes or propositions. The peer examiner will review the researcher's coding lists against the interview data, to monitor how the researcher's biases may be impacting the analysis process (e.g., coding and interpretation process).

A peer examiner is often selected from a pool of others, researching the same or similar phenomenon at the site or across sites. The peer examiner may be chosen from those who are familiar with the population studied or from among those who can provide cross-theoretical (from the perspective of a different theoretical orientation) validation of my coding structure (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Using a peer examiner will enhance authenticity of the participant's story as it will help the researcher to tell the participant's story in a language close to that of the participants. My CRP Committee Chair, Dr. Joy Tanji, will serve as a methodological consultant, providing peer debriefing and peer examination throughout the study. The theoretical orientation of this study's peer examiner is different from my own orientation, providing me with an opportunity to challenge the depth and breadth of my findings.

Generating a narrative. Once the coding lists have been resolved, the codes are back-translated into a narrative that focuses on the most essential thematic aspects of the participant's experiences of the phenomenon. This back-translation is shared with participants during the member check to clarify if the story was accurately captured and if there is anything that the participants would like to add, restate, or change. Alternatively, the story can be constructed as the interviews progress. Sharing these emergent narratives can sometimes help participants

access more of what they know. It also gives participants an ongoing opportunity to check the researcher's interpretations of what they have shared so far.

I will be taking the essence of what each participant has shared with me and back-translating these essential themes into a personal narrative of the participant's experiences of falling out of romantic love. The narrative will be shared with the participant during the member check, along with the interview transcripts. The narrative presentation will include exemplar quotes that bring life to the thematic findings in addition to allowing the participant to speak for himself.

Member check. A member check is conducted throughout the process by giving participants the opportunity to correct, elaborate, or argue what they have expressed through the interview process (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). During ongoing member checks, participants may actively engage in reviewing transcripts, narrative drafts, exemplar quotes selected for inclusion in the narratives, and in sharing how they are experiencing the process of participating in the study. Sometimes, participants may also have suggestions regarding what they wish the researchers would explore further with them (Glesne, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Prior to my last meeting with participants, I will send them the materials that will be reviewed during the member check so that they have ample time to review them and consider the fit of these narratives to their stories. During the member check, the participant will have the chance to discuss the narrative including adding, redacting, or editing any part of the document to enhance accuracy or fidelity. The member check grants participants interpretive authority, or the right to review interpretations of what was shared so the final presentation fits with their own understanding of their experiences (Glesne, 2011).

Lastly, the member check will involve a final review of the initial consent protocol, a discussion of the participant's experiences as a participant in the study, and signing of the Final Consent and Release of Information Form (Appendix G). The researcher may also conduct a debriefing with the participants. This creates an opportunity to thank the participants for their contributions and to inquire whether there were questions or directions they wish the researcher would have pursued.

Methods of Verification

Methods of verification are strategies to determine the methodological rigor of a qualitative study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). These strategies may include the following: entry (or ongoing development of rapport), relational ethics, role management, review of biases, methodological transparency, purposive sampling, triangulation, immersion, auditing, constant comparative analysis, debriefing, peer examination, member checking, and presentation of selective coding.

Validity

Rossman and Rallis (2017) believe that the aim for a study is its use, or that its findings are sufficiently believable that others will "use those findings to take action to improve social circumstances" (p. 59). But this can only be done when the findings have a sufficient amount of trustworthiness. Thus, it must be credible to possible users. The goal of a qualitative inquiry is to capture a participant's experience as honestly and fully as possible. In order to do so, a researcher must adequately understand and present the findings in a way that "rings true" or has face validity (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Validity in qualitative inquiries is defined as the emic accuracy of the findings; how credible or how congruent the findings of a study are with the participants' realities. Validity also involves the confirmability of the findings or the assurance

that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants themselves instead of from the bias preference of the researcher.

Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which a study produces consistent or stable results. According to Rossman and Rallis (2017), for a qualitative study to be trustworthy, it must be more reliable than valid. Reliability or transferability requires theoretical saturation. The more thick and rich the codes, the more likely they will reveal universal themes rather than just the idiographic themes of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

It is important for the researcher to work systematically and rigorously, and to document this process and any refinements made to it during the study. This enhances the comparability of the study to future replications with other participants in other settings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). It is acknowledged that each qualitative study will still be slightly different from the last because the methodology is shaped over time to better capture the immediate emergent findings, but by documenting the process in detail, the researcher is able to share this process with other researchers making it more possible to develop comparable studies with transferable findings (Shenton, 2004).

Methods Used to Enhance Validity and Reliability

A trustworthy study is one that is credible and usable (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Thus, it must be valid and reliable. Multiple methods of verification are used to enhance both validity and reliability.

Epoché. Epoché is significant in transcendental phenomenology as it manages the biases of a study (Moustakas, 1994). It involves the sufficiency of entry, relational ethics, and role management of a project and awareness of one's own biases and how they can impact a study

(Moustakas, 1994). The purpose and intent of the transcendental phenomenological study is to minimize the researcher's interpretation of the participant's story in addition to highlighting the interpretations of self-experiences. In order to accomplish this, awareness and reflexivity around my own assumptions will be processed through keeping a field journal which will be reviewed by peer debriefer and peer examiner. My CRP chair will also serve as this study's methodological consultant. For this study, Joy Tanji, Ph.D., will play the role of peer debriefer, peer examiner, and CRP chair to help identify emerging biases. She will help examine the impact of such biases and assist in attempting to more fully access the participant's experiences.

Entry. Entry contributes to validity as it enhances the participants' authentic sharing of their private, idiographic experiences with outsiders by supporting a sense of safety and fidelity. This will also contribute to the reliability of the study because the greater one has with participants, the greater the amount of authenticity of the sharing. In addition, the more the descriptive specificity attained during focused discussions, the more quickly theoretical saturation can be achieved.

Relational ethics. The second dynamic of epoché is relational ethics and are ethical principles that focus on fairness and the balance of power between the participant and researcher (Moustakas, 1994). This enhances validity by supporting a deepening trust and authenticity during exchanges (Moustakas, 1994). If the researcher demonstrates a commitment to being trustworthy and the participants feel empowered, participants are more inclined to share what is most meaningful to them. This also contributes to the study's reliability because it enhances the sense of safety and fidelity for the study which augments analytical generalizability by supporting increased sharing of thick and rich, authentic disclosures by participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Role management. The third dynamic of epoché is role management or the portrayal of involvement in the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is usually typical to be overt about the role in the purpose of the study. However, sometimes it may be useful to initially choose not to fully disclose his or her specific role or focus. Though the latter should be minimized, as it is important to consider the potential impact and ethical implications of deceiving participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Other ways to control role management is to include informed consent or involve gatekeepers, or individuals who are entrusted to enforce regulations or policies with respect to who can or cannot have access to certain knowledge (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Role management enhances validity because the quality of the data provided by participants in a study are determined by the quality and fidelity of the relationship the researcher has with her or his partners (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Even with the best intentions, if deception is used, a researcher must determine if the harm done can ever be meaningfully repaired. The clearer a researcher can be, the easier it is for participants and gatekeepers to position themselves safely in relation to the researcher. Thus for this study, participants will be informed about what the study is about. They will be given an informed consent form to sign to verify they understand what is being studied. This may assist in attaining enhanced validity as a result of their trust in the researcher. This will also contribute to the reliability of the study by contributing to the overall sense of safety, authenticity, and fidelity conveyed to participants (Glesne, 2016). The stronger and clearer the relationship between the researcher and participants, the easier it is for the participants to feel safe and clear about the researcher's intent, thus share their stories in detail (Glesne, 2016).

Review of biases. When conducting a study, a researcher may experience issues such as internal conflicts, losing themselves, or facing internal conflicts (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Thus

it is important to include ways to periodically withdraw from the field, or debrief and let go, so that the phenomenon can be seen and maintained with relatively naïve eyes. This may be done with a review of biases that discusses and documents theoretical or professional, methodological or research paradigm-related, and personal biases of the researcher that may negatively impact or compromise the rigor of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

A review of biases includes a specific acknowledgement of initial biases the researcher is aware of, a discussion of how these biases may impact the study, and a provisional action plan regarding how biases will be challenged or minimized during and between conversations (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The list of biases and the action plans developed to manage them are continually revised and updated throughout the study. It can be used by the researcher, debriefer, and peer examiner throughout the study in order to generate questions that may enhance researcher reflexivity relative to areas of potential biases.

A review of biases is important because it helps the researcher capture the participants' stories with emic accuracy. The process of reviewing and challenging biases on a regular basis support investigation of alternative plausible hypotheses about the phenomenon. This process is important for rigor (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It contributes to the reliability of the study because it allows the researcher to be conscious of how his or her filter impedes additional entry and access to better immersion and understanding of a phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It helps a researcher go deeper and be better attuned to themes they did not expect to see or hear.

To review, process, and reflect on my own potential biases, my plan will be to employ frequent journaling to help me maintain my awareness of my potential reactions (positive and negative). Once I am aware of these biases, I can be more mindful in my attempts to interpret participants' stories with emic accuracy.

Debriefing. Peer debriefing provides methodological consultation before, during, and after data collection in the field (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). A debriefer will be met on a weekly or biweekly basis to discuss emerging observations, conceptualizations, and methodological challenges. This "watchdog" is intended to be both a devil's advocate and sounding board and may provide backup for the researcher's internal reflexive process of questioning inferences, exploring alternative plausible hypotheses, and brainstorming methodological refinements that address problems encountered in the field (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The addition of a debriefer enhances validity by increasing reflexive and methodological rigor, by challenging the researcher's biases and stimulating brainstorming. This will also contribute to the reliability of the study because it enhances the analytical generalizability of the study by lending rigor to the constant comparative analysis process (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This process explores the impact of biases on the emerging data analysis, examining whether the researcher has uncovered more than what he or she expected to find (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Ultimately, it broadens and deepens each cycle of data collection and theoretical saturation of the study's findings.

Peer examination. Like peer debriefing, peer examination requires intensive self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher which can be challenging but a necessary part of the field methodology (Glesne, 2016). Researchers and peer examiners must seek ways to collaboratively cultivate an environment in which rigorous dialoguing about coding decisions which can be supported (Glesne, 2016). Doing so enhances the rigor of data analysis because it provides an opportunity to critically evaluate the coding strategy or understand what may be lost or minimized given current coding biases (Glesne, 2016). Peer examination enhances validity by assisting with capturing and portraying another's reality through low-inference descriptors (Glesne, 2016).

The story captured will be told in the context of language spoken very close to the participants. This will enhance the authenticity of the portrayal (Glesne, 2016). Peer examination also enhances reliability due to supporting analytic generalizability. If the coding structure appears too flat or narrow, the peer examiner and debriefer can facilitate with understanding what is contributing to this outcome and strategically generate ways to broaden and deepen the understanding of the phenomenon in subsequent rounds (Glesne, 2016).

Member checking. A member check involves a check-in with the participants to verify the accuracy of transcripts and narratives. Participants can discuss concerns regarding disclosures they wish to strike, add, restate, or elaborate, especially from the final narrative write-up of the study, ultimately checking materials for accuracy of transcription, portrayal, and interpretations (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Active collaboration and involvement, to the degree the participant's desire, allows them to own their stories at multiple levels (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Member checking enhances validity as it allows significant opportunities to actively collaborate with the data collection and analysis process, which in turn ensures their experiences are captured with fidelity (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This contributes to the reliability of the study as it enhances analytical generalizability by challenging the researcher to stay very close to the language of participants and therefore be able to see the subtle differences between participants' lived experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Methodological transparency. This method of verification involves an active discussion of methodological inquiries, findings and concerns that are encountered in the field, how and with whom they were found, how they were addressed, and the outcome of the methodological refinements or changes that were made (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Methodological memos will be recorded in the researcher's field methods journal throughout the study and will become a vehicle for reflective reflexivity about methodology that includes thinking about the different agendas, many experiences or researchers and participants, and how to meet both of their needs with sensitivity (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The field method documentation will allow other researchers to learn from how this study was conducted.

Ultimately, the shared findings may contribute to rapid and detailed changes in the accuracy of this study's methodology. Methodological transparency will contribute to the reliability of the study because it enhances analytical generalizability by helping the researcher to maintain his or her presence and attention to the details of the emergent methodology and findings (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It will thus increase the reflexive accuracy of the comparative analysis process and aid the researcher with saturating the codes or proposition of the phenomenon emerging in the field data (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

CHAPTER III

EMERGENT FIELD METHOD

[The following chapter documents the implementation of the field method proposed in Chapter II. While the structure and process outlined in the previous chapter remained the same, the researcher documents the nuances of this process so that other researchers may gain insights for conducting similar field studies that further this line of research. This chapter also provides methodological transparency that can help consumers of the study better assess the rigor of its findings.]

Pre-entry

Review of Biases

The review of biases identifies and discusses theoretical or professional, methodological, and personal biases of the researcher that were monitored by the researcher, peer debriefer, and peer examiner during the course of the study. In qualitative inquiry, researchers recognize that bias is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can preclude us from capturing the emic or idiographic information provided by participants while, on the other hand, our professional, methodological, and personal perspectives may sensitize us to the subtle complexities of a participant's narrative. A researcher must therefore be reflexive and consider throughout the study how biases are impacting data collection, analysis, construction of the narrative, and interpretation of the results (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The review of bias begins with a specific acknowledgement of initial biases the researcher is aware of, a discussion of how these biases may impact the study, and a provisional action plan regarding how these biases will be challenged or minimized during and between focused conversations with participants.

The review of biases can be used by peer debriefers and peer examiners throughout the study to generate questions that enhance researcher reflexivity relative to areas of potential bias. Proposed action plans are tested in the field and revised as needed. The review of biases is also

updated throughout the study. As the researcher and his or her team become aware of new, emergent biases, the researcher documents them and develops action plans for their management (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Theoretical and professional biases. A theoretical orientation is often autobiographical of what a therapist has found meaningful in his or her own life. When participants in a study construct their world, or focus on dimensions of their experiences that are meaningful to them, it may be incongruent with those of the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The researcher must be careful not to judge the participant's way of making sense of his or her world or dismiss it as irrelevant to the participant's story (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In psychology, where researchers are exposed to a multitude of theories that help him or her function effectively as a clinician, researchers may find it particularly challenging to identify and reflexively question implicit theoretical assumptions that have become so automatic. The researcher's theoretical allegiances, though, may selectively focus his or her attention on specific aspects of a participant's story over others, making it difficult to capture what is most meaningful in the participant's narrative.

My own theoretical orientation presumes that society is generally well ordered, and unfolds in predictable ways which means that prediction is possible. However, I also presume that there are sociocultural processes that imprison individuals and organizations in subtle and explicit ways, processes that may be amenable to change, which means that I also believe transformation is possible. In preparing to enter the field, I realized that I was more likely to expect the participants' stories to match findings in the extant literature and might have difficulty hearing aspects of participants' stories that challenged established theories.

My own clinical experiences also contributed to difficulties hearing and understanding aspects of the participants' narratives, especially when the participants' experiences and meaning

making were atypical when compared to that of others with whom I had worked. I recognize

that my expectations may have skewed the direction of our conversations and my analysis of

their personal accounts. During the study, though, I attempted to address these theoretical biases

by listening carefully to participants during the interview, being fully present, debriefing, and

member checking my interpretations with the participants to make sure their narratives were

being accurately understood and portrayed throughout the project.

    Methodological biases. Methodological biases emerge from the researcher's allegiance

to a particular research paradigm. In qualitative inquiries, methodological biases may emerge

due to the researcher's greater exposure to quantitative methodology and its assumptions.

During the study, I became increasingly mindful that my methodological biases also might

emerge from the assumptions of the research paradigm I was using to study the phenomenon of

falling out of romantic love. I was mindful that any method used might have assumptions about

what would be meaningful to study and what was knowable, and that these assumptions could

influence what I would ultimately find. Two forms of methodological biases I monitored include

role management and methodological drift (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

    A researcher may assume a role that is more congruent with a research paradigm different

than the one being used (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This constitutes a role management problem.

In qualitative inquiries, that might mean assuming a more expert rather than learner or

collaborative role. Since I am training in clinical psychology, I was also at increased the risk of

slipping into a therapeutic role especially if the participant conveyed perspectives I believed

were dysfunctional.

    A researcher with more training in quantitative methods may tend to assume a role or

make decisions in the field in ways that are more congruent with the assumptions of a positivist

or interpretivist tradition (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). This would constitute methodological drift. A researcher steeped in the assumptions of the positivist or interpretivist paradigm might tend to assume that when participants report constructions of reality that do not match what has already been widely accepted in the field, that their constructions represent some form of error.

Throughout this study, I strived to inform my decisions with assumptions that were congruent with the interpretivist paradigm. Research guided by these assumptions facilitated my movement toward generating emergent or working understandings rather than general predictive laws (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Because of my strong quantitative research background, I acknowledged having a tendency toward confirmatory bias. Documenting my methodological journey and debriefing were crucial to monitoring and maintaining rigor in the study.

Personal biases. A researcher's personal biases typically come from his or her socialization and unique life experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). I had to examine how my socialization and life experiences might be similar and different from those of the participants. I had to remember that my role in a qualitative inquiry was to learn rather than to judge or facilitate change.

An example of a personal bias that had the potential to negatively impact my study was *cultural bias.* Based on my personal cultural lens, I worked closely with my debriefer to examine my assumptions about motivations and influences throughout the study. On one end of the spectrum of cultural bias was *ethnocentrism* which involved arbitrating another culture solely by the values and standards of my own culture. On the other end of the spectrum of cultural bias was cultural relativism. To minimize my ethnocentrism, I sought to move more toward *cultural relativism* (the principle that an individual's beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of that individual's own culture) by showing unconditional positive regard and being

cognizant of their own cultural assumptions. Comprehensive cultural relativism, however, is never fully attainable.

Another example of a personal bias I was concerned I might encounter in this study was *confirmatory bias* which occurs when evidence is selectively gathered in order to support the researcher's hypotheses or beliefs (Plous, 1993). Unchecked, a researcher may judge and weigh responses that corroborate his or her beliefs by considering them more reliable and relevant while disregarding responses that do not support his or her pre-existing frameworks (Plous, 1993). This form of bias is deeply seated in assumptions used to understand and filter information and also tends to lead a researcher to focus on one hypothesis at a time (Plous, 1993).

Since I had already experienced falling out of love in my own life, I needed to be aware of my predisposition to "fully understand" a participant's narrative without confirming his experiences. To minimize confirmatory bias, I continually reevaluated impressions of respondents and challenged my preexisting assumptions and hypotheses. It was helpful to member check, consult, debrief, and journal frequently to make sure that my understanding of a person's experience is accurate.

Entry

Gatekeepers

Prior to entering the field, it is helpful to consider determining whose experiences one might purposively sample. The nature of one's relationship with gatekeepers and informants can impact one's access to the phenomenon and its participants. Gatekeepers and informants typically protect the safety of participants from outsiders. Even if potential gatekeepers are

known, informants and participants, the quality of information gathered during a study is highly dependent on relational ethics (Glesne, 2016).

In this study, I already had some initial rapport with both participants. I inquired to see whether they might be able to identify others who might meet the inclusion criteria once the study was approved by the Chaminade University of Honolulu Institutional Review Board. In case that plan did not work, a second strategy of using a gatekeeper in the community was proposed in order to locate unmarried, heterosexual, adult American men (who were born and raised in Hawai'i) who might be interested in the study. Due to the level of participation of the study, no gatekeepers were needed.

Purposive Sampling

Quota case selection was used. This is a criterion-based purposive sampling method in which variations of patterns are selected for examination (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 2002). Consideration was given to finding participants with a diversity of cultural considerations, familial background, and experiences (including relationship status after falling out of romantic love). In particular, I began the process of theory building by identifying participants who had varied upbringing (intact/divorced family), belief in marriage, worldview (collectivistic versus individualistic), and relational history since falling out of love (seeking a committed relationship, casually dating). Because of the rich intersectionality (intersecting diversity factors impacting social identity) in Hawai'i, I began this process of discovery by exploring these differences as they impacted the experiences of two very different relationship histories among men falling in and out of love in Hawai'i.

In total, two participants who fit the inclusion criteria (unmarried, heterosexual, adult American men who were born and raised in Hawai'i and had experienced falling in and out of

love with a significant other) and who varied on a number of attitudinal and worldviews expressed interest in participating in the study.

One of the struggles that I encountered during the research process was being able to determine if the participants truly met the criteria of having the experience of falling in and out of romantic love. Because the experience is quite subjective, I chose to take each participant's declaration of experiencing the phenomenon at face value. However, during the interviews, I began to realize that in subsequent studies, one might need to more carefully assess the extent of each potential participants' experiences with the phenomenon of interest. During this study, I made sure to journal frequently and attend frequent peer debriefing meetings to discuss this concern.

Role Management

TI filled a variety of roles in multiple contexts during the duration of this study. Because of these many roles, I was faced with finding ways to be mindful of the methodology of the qualitative study and how these different roles might impact the study. Some might argue that this role complexity could compromise the rigor of a study, but I found that these breaks afforded me critical reflection time. While it was important to be mindful to adhere to the study's methodology, the other professional and personal roles I held gave me settling time to be able to process and analyze the data differently. That space and time allowed me to start seeing patterns that might have gone unnoticed had I rushed through the methodical process of sifting through the data and codes in search of each participant's self-organization around his experiences of falling out of romantic love.

Informed Consent Protocol

After both participants were identified, I emailed the Initial Informed Consent form (Appendix F) at least one day before meeting for our scheduled interviews. We spent approximately 30 minutes in a quiet space fully reviewing the initial consent. The participants were informed that our interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed, but that at any point they could ask to speak off the record. In such an instance, I would turn off the recorder. Participants were informed, both through the informed consent form and verbally, that anything shared off the record would not be included in the study unless it was repeated on the record, during taping, at a later time. Both participants were given the opportunity to have their questions answered. They both gave verbal consent, chose their pseudonyms, and signed the consent forms. Copies of the signed informed consent were provided to them.

Before each interview, participants were reminded of their rights to confidentiality. They were reminded that the interview would be audio recorded and transcribed, and that if at any point they wanted to speak off the record, could do so and the recorder will be stopped. Before each interview, they were asked explicitly to give permission to begin the audio recording. At the end of each interview, participants were informed when the recorder was stopped as well.

Data Collection and Analysis

Constant comparative analysis involves iterative cycles of working through data collection, data analysis, and the write up of a study's findings. To implement a rigorous and systematic constant comparative analysis, the researcher must be able to time the different steps of collecting data, transcribing, and analyzing the material so that each cycle informs the next. The value of timely and efficient constant comparative analyses is that it allows the researcher to closely monitor the emergent dimensions and properties, so that subsequent rounds of data

collection can continue to broaden, deepen, and saturate the findings rather than repeating themes that have already been identified in previous rounds.

The biggest challenge to constant comparative analysis is the culture of modern society. It is no longer practical for urban researchers conducting backyard research, especially without a large grant, to devote all of their time to a project. Many researchers may be conducting research while juggling multiple roles. This was a challenge I faced, too. During the duration of the study, I was a student completing supervised clinical work in the community and, later, a pre-doctoral psychology intern. These roles made it difficult to complete data collection, full verbatim transcription and auditing, data analysis, and methodological consultation before returning to the field for subsequent rounds of data collection. In addition, I needed to coordinate my busy schedule with those of the two participants. This not only may have compromised the constant comparative analysis process, but also immersion.

The way I addressed this predicament was to delay full microanalysis until completing data collection and using macroanalysis (thematic coding by document) and regular consultations with my methodological consultant between interviews. I also journaled in order to keep track of emerging themes and inform generation of new grand tour and mini-tour questions. This method was helpful as it allowed me to stay well connected with the research, while being able to maintain other personal and professional roles. Some limitations that resulted in this process was that it restricted my ability to be fully immersed into the coding process, which may have restricted the ability to determine the full essence of the phenomenon.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were scheduled with each participant via phone call or text, based on their preference. I met with both participants at a private location of their choosing. In order to

maintain rapport, I engaged participants in short casual check-ins before and after interviews. Participants agreed to have interviews on the same days of the week, at the same time, every week.

Between interviews, I would generate a new list of potential grand tour questions and make them available to the participants. Some questions were informed by my initial research questions while others were follow-ups to themes that had emerged during previous interviews. The mini-tour questions often slowed the process down and explored relevant critical events in greater detail. This process gave the participants the opportunity to focus on the details of specific events of their experience. It then allowed me to lay out these experiential puzzle pieces and understand the phenomenon more sharply.

Sometimes, it was difficult to decide what to ask and how to best capture participants' experiences. Being unable to complete the full analysis and emergent write-up of each round before conducting another interview may have contributed to this challenge. It also was difficult to avoid leading questions, too. As a clinical psychology student, I was often curious about participants' interpretations and conceptualizations of their own experiences. While exploring these aspects of participants' experiences was not out of the question, I needed to be careful not to digress into a clinical interview. I needed to find ways of exploring these aspects of participants' experiences more descriptively in order to capture their emic understandings of their own experience.

During the interviews, I actively listened to the participants' stories, asked follow-up questions, and reflected their content to make sure that I understood what they were saying. The interviews flowed smoothly as focused conversations. I made a mindful effort to fully engage in their own experiences without adding my own to the conversations. Focused conversation is

challenging because it involves a two-way conversation that maintains a focus on the phenomenon of interest while limiting the space occupied by the researcher. I knew that if I had begun talking about my own personal experiences, it might have triggered or dictated the direction of the conversation. This would have taken away from the essence of the participants' full experience. Being mindful of not disclosing my own experiences offered the participants an opportunity to express what it was like for themselves.

Another struggle I encountered was how to facilitate participants when discussing uncomfortable topics. Although I had a decent rapport with the participants of the study, there were moments when I needed to honor the decisions by participants not to disclose certain experiences. This was promised during the informed consent and I was careful to follow through on this promise. Adjusting to this difference between therapy and research was difficult, however I was mindful of the importance of not flooding or overwhelming participants in these moments; honoring their internal wisdom. Participants invariably talked about their current relationships and falling back into romantic love. In these instances, I faced another challenge—how to honor the sense of vulnerability they might be feeling when still in that early phase of new love. Again, I deferred to my participants to pace the process and let me know what they were ready to disclose.

The most important and priceless skill I learned from this method that may be incorporated into my clinical practice was the art of phenomenological exploration. In phenomenology, the objective is to understand another individual's worldview, regardless of what my own biases might be. Qualitative phenomenological work involves going into the research assuming he or she knows nothing about the topic. The interviewer must ask questions in a more inquisitive and curious way rather than assuming he or she knows what the other

means. This reflexive strategy is good for case work and is what is important for all individuals to be better therapists.

After the final interviews took place, I briefly described the data analysis process and the process I would be using to construct a narrative of their experiences. I explained how I would chose exemplar quotes from the interviews to help illustrate the emergent themes in their stories.

Debriefing

After each interview, I spoke directly with my debriefer in person or by phone. During those meetings, I discussed the directions and specific narratives that were emerging in the interviews. I brainstormed emergent themes and discussed how to unpack those I did not fully understand yet. Other things that were discussed included the challenges I was facing in my interviews (i.e., guarded disclosures around certain aspects of participants' experiences), my personal reactions, and possible questions I could use to guide the flow of the narratives based on the content that was being shared. Other discussions included being mindful of my own biases and how they might be impacting my data collection and analysis. My debriefer and I brainstormed ways I might reflexively challenge my own perspectives or assumptions both during and between interviews. Hearing a different perspective assisted me in gaining insight into the phenomenological space of my participants, as well as reminding me to be mindful of my reactions and biases that were present in the interviews, as well as the coding.

Immersion

Direct immersion into the participants' lives or community was not required or part of this retrospective research design. However, the process of having consecutive, weekly conversations with each participant provided me with an opportunity to review the interviews and content, and determine what questions I could ask in subsequent conversations. Having

multiple interviews gave the participants an opportunity to formulate answers to my questions on one week and revisit these conversations in subsequent weeks as new insights emerged. This process also afforded me an opportunity to double back, clarify, and deepen discussions about certain aspects of their stories.

Cultural Protocols

Qualitative inquiries are essentially cultural studies. Culture is broadly defined to include the relevant social identity group a researcher needs to enter. It is essential that the researcher enter into the scene with respect and sensitivity. The researcher is not conducting an experiment. Instead, the researcher is there to learn, gain a phenomenological and emic understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions, not judge or study experiences of the participants as though the participants are specimens (Glesne, 2016).

In this study, it was my hope that I would be able to understand and unravel the lived experience of falling out of romantic love for an adult male living in Hawaiʻi. Because culture is a complex phenomenon, I recognized that it would be impossible to generalize one or two lived experiences to a larger population. That was not the intent of this study, though. Qualitative inquiries are used to raise important questions and point in new directions for future inquiry. They typically use purposive samples that examine what may seem to be atypical experiences relative to a phenomenon, but may actually be nuances of experience that have been overlooked in an effort to identify generalizable theories. Throughout the study, I attempted to remain mindful of my own personal cultural biases or natural tendencies to want to generalize the meaning of stories the participants were communicating to me. I used journaling as a method to explore my biases and to consider how these biases might skew my perceptions of the participants' experiences.

As one might assume, balancing objectivity and subjectivity was particularly difficult, especially because this was backyard research. As such, I was interviewing people with whom I was already acquainted to some degree. Out of respect for the complexity of our relationships, I had to figure out how I could dance that line of trying to draw out what was relevant to the phenomenon while being sensitive to insider knowledge I might have given our relationships in other contexts. In addition, I had to consider pacing my questions and interviews.

Because the products of qualitative inquiries are co-owned, I also wanted to be sensitive to and honor participants' desires to collaborate on the construction of their narratives. This collaboration included supporting them in rewording exemplar quotes as needed rather than taking out information. In that way, I could preserve the authenticity of the emergent themes while removing "juicy" quotes that could be restated in a more matter-of-fact way. I recognized that because these narratives belonged to the participants, it was still in their right to withdraw information they did not feel ready to reveal. As a qualitative researcher, my intent was to be respectful and sensitive to the participants. Perhaps they did not feel comfortable or possibly felt ashamed about expressing certain topics to the world. In order to balance that subjectivity, I learned it was important to allow the participant to find either another quote or have them create one on the spot to capture the general feeling that also illustrated content that was important to the study. In this way, I was able to uphold my fidelity to the participants. The main focus of my study was to identify some "gold mines" that have been heretofore missed in the extant literature.

Coding

When I had completed the interviews with both participants, all interviews were transcribed and coded separately. As previously explained, coding began with open coding

where a code was assigned to each section based on content and theme. Each interview was broken down into meaningful chunks and assigned a short label. The open codes for all interviews were then examined together and clustered and subclustered axial codes. These axial codes were then regrouped into larger overarching categories that eventually converged toward a core code for each participant. In vivo codes, or words that came directly from the participant, were used where possible in order to stay close to the language of the participant.

The core code thematically captured the essence of that participant's experience of falling out of romantic love. "John" and "Ben's" core codes were *Something Felt Wrong* and *Something Missing*, respectively. Their core codes were related in that their experiences were described as an unidentifiable, vague feeling or experience that could not be identified. Their core codes were similar in that they captured some feeling of emptiness that became too unbearable to manage anymore. This similarity was then used as the end core code.

Peer Examination

Once the codes were completed for each participant, results were shared with my peer examiner for feedback. The integrated coding structure was examined for fit with the emic interview data. Having a peer examiner was helpful as it allowed my codes to be reviewed and for me to get feedback or brainstorm additional thoughts regarding themes and nuances I may have missed.

Member Check

After coding the participants' interviews, I generated a brief narrative summarizing what had been shared during that interview. Once I completed this process for each interview, I integrated the narrative summaries across interviews for each participant. I then added exemplar quotes from the participants' interviews to exemplify their themes.

The narratives with quotes were then sent to the participants in password-protected files. Passwords were sent to the participants in separate e-mails. Participants were reminded that they had the right to change, delete, or add to the information provided in the narrative. They were also asked to review the quotes that were used to illustrate the themes in the narrative to ensure that their voice was accurately represented. Any changes that were requested were edited and returned to the participant until they were fully satisfied with the results. Participants were open to receiving and giving feedback of their narratives. Both participants expressed interest in reading what was composed. They requested minimal to no changes. Once they were pleased with the results, participants were asked to sign a final consent and release of information form. This last meeting gave us an opportunity to also process what the interview was like.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE FINDINGS

My aim in this study was to explore the experiences associated with falling out of romantic love for two men between the ages of 18 and 30. Their stories begin a process of exploring how this experience is different for men and what we might begin to learn about the experience from their perspectives that will help us better support men going through these losses.

"John"

John is a 26-year-old, heterosexual, graduate student who was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai'i. He and his younger sister were raised by their mother and father in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

Influences: The Complexity of Love

According to John, the nature of romantic love is complex. He described romantic love as an essence and disposition introduced to him at a very young age. He was exposed to the concept of romance by witnessing others, watching films, and reading about it in literature. Despite its complexity, though, John noted that its complexity did not seem to stop people from seeking it, learning about what they could expect or how they should behave in order to achieve that experience.

Family. A lot of John's earlier memories are focused on how his mother and father focused their attention on the family as a whole, or directly on him (or his sister), with less attention focused on themselves as a couple. Because of this, he admits paying little attention to his parents as a couple in a relationship. However, now, as an adult, things were beginning to change. Now that the attention was no longer on him, John said he had begun to see them in a

very different light.   He sees how they could have their relationship and live their lives. Getting older had helped give him the insight to see his parents' relationship differently than he had when he was younger.

He noted that the focus was now on observing the way they interacted as a couple rather than the way the four of them interacted as a family. John referred to his parents' relationship as a "partnership" or "friendship with endearment and respect." He described their relationship as having an "enduring kind of love quality" as companions.

One of the big ideas John grew up with was valuing marriage. He credited his current relationship values to his parents. He said he had observed his parents to endure the challenges of life together and that this had contributed to his expectations in his own relationships. His parents wanted him to have a "normal" relationship, get married, and have children. He had begun to focus on how they got there—by enduring the many hardships they faced together and persevering in their commitment to making things work.

Nature of love: Social myths. John said that he had started to notice that people who are romantically in love tend to simply "act it out" until their mind catches up with their behaviors. People will mimic what they have seen in movies or from their parents and act out what they imagine and believe romance looks like. Movies simplify the way people formulate relationships, though. John said that if romantic love was indeed how it was portrayed in films, he would have to remain skeptical about love. He believed there were many ways people might end up together, resulting in endless possibilities of how partners might move through life with one another. So the process of and path toward love maintains a sense of mystery that comes with creating a unique and intimate relationship with another.

In each of his relationships, John said he was not able to fully and clearly articulate the path or process that had led him to them. It was not like the movies. Movies, on the other hand, articulate these paths in a very "clean" way and do not fully demonstrate the complex nature of how a relationship develops or becomes fostered. John felt that rather than telling the story of relationships in a more unique and individualized way, movies tended to be cliché and generalize a storyline to foster relatability with its viewers. He felt that this missed capturing the depth and complexity of these relationships. John said he believed that a true love story was complex and that those who talk about their romances always seem to skim the surface of their experiences. That is not what he was interested in. He was interested in something beyond cliché, something of substance. The superficial facades did not fully capture the experience for him.

Media tends to teach young boys that they need to change themselves in order to impress a girl. Disney motion pictures like the "Lion King," for example, portrays a weak, young boy getting beaten by a girl in order to precipitate a process of transformation that would ultimately impress the girl and make him more desirable. John believes it is important for men to adjust the way they present themselves. He believes that when people see something desirable, they want to engage in it more, and try to pull from it as much as they can, maybe even merge with it.

> Guys, in general, have to adjust the way they present themselves, because they need to appear desirable to girls. If they're not [seen as desirable], it's really damaging, I think, to their self-esteem.

This has influenced John's initial approach to relationships with girls. For example, John said when he was in high school, he had only thought of impressing girls. If he "got her, then that [was] it." He admitted to never thinking to himself, "Oh my gosh, I'm so in love and this is great." Rather, with his first girlfriends, Girl-A and Girl-B, he recognized it was about sexual and physical attraction, hoping he could get a date with them. On the other hand, impressing a

girl and getting her attention was not necessarily his main goal by the time he met Girl-C. He admitted that he was "still trying to make sense of it."

Love has a component that is unexplainable or difficult to show on a screen. The most meaningful component of love was difficult for him to express. He noted that he had a "hard time articulating it in a way that [would be] appreciated or understood." At the same time, he knew that what he saw portrayed in the media did not "give [the feeling] the justice it deserve[d]."

Technology. The media portrays romantic love as involving an ideal romantic partner or soulmate. Romantic love is repeatedly depicted and perceived as a lifelong experience as long as we find *the* right person. Our life, as a consequence of finding the right person, is then portrayed as perfect; living happily ever after. Peers, friends, and fictional characters (from movies, books, blogs, magazines, and news articles) search for these perfect individuals, characterized by a checklist of traits and qualities that promise relational success.

Many people assume they know enough about themselves to be able to pick a perfect significant other. However, the concept of "perfect" is defined differently by each individual. There is a "vast amount of information and accessibility to connect with people." Technological advancement has resulted in people being flooded with choices and too many options. According to John, this is contributing to increasing confusion around how to find the best person possible and quickly, instead of valuing the relationships that currently exist. There is this idea in romantic partnerships that an "ideal human is going to make the rest of your life perfect."

> I fundamentally disagree that we know ourselves well enough to be like, "Hey, that person is going to make me happy for a long time." . . .You can't plan to like or fall in love with someone, but you must be open to the possibility of it. And I think when you

meet someone, you will oddly know that it's going to be something that you want to see what will happen with them.

John feels that the excitement of being in love comes down to the "not knowing." He feels that because there are so many choices with social media and dating applications, actual romantic love gets destroyed because the mystery is not allowed. To him, people are constantly searching for the perfect someone. Technological advancements, social media, and internet connections have spoiled us into thinking there are shortcuts to creating meaningful connections. As a result, he believes a connection or relationship with another becomes unappreciated and is perceived as expendable with the thought that there may be someone better "out there."

Society also fosters the idea that our one true soulmate exists out there. We just need to find that person. John feels that many are too scared to take the chance and have a deep emotional connection because of the hope that there may be someone who is a much better fit out there. He believes that having the courage to take chances is not encouraged enough to allow us to take a leap of faith and risk love again.

Love: "Losing Rationality of How to Be"

John recalled his younger self describing *romantic love* as being "like a fairy tale where the prince comes on a horse and saves the princess, and then she's happy, and then they live happily ever after." His idea of romantic love shifted in high school, though, to something more practical and relatable. By the time John was 15-years-old, the fairy tale was not about saving a princess in distress. Instead, John's idea about love was about getting married, celebrating, and having families come together.

> It had more of like a celebration kind of feel in that we're going to spend the rest of our lives together, forever, and everything's going to be perfect. We're going to have babies and have a family, that kind of thing.

John noted that "romantic love" and "romance" are different in that there is less of an investment of yourself in "romance." He said the "romance" component of a relationship involved considering whether it was worth putting the work in and trying to sustain it. However, "romantic love" involved investing in a process of creating the romance instead of it just happening.

John said he believed that the essence of a relationship shifted when the chase element was replaced with "feeling very grateful." Both were exciting, but in romantic relationships:

> It was like losing rationality of how to be. I kind of got thrown into completely thinking about one person and investing in them and thinking about them all the time and how my behaviors or what I say or what I do or how I act will either keep me with this person or push me away from them. I was trying not to get pushed away, so I would try to do everything to make them like me, make them feel like our relationship's valuable. I want to spend all my time with them and commit to them.

John believed romantic love was associated with fantasy or idealism. He explained that its grandiose nature caused it to be unsustainable due to one or both partners being less grounded in reality. While the experience of romantic love can be a "positive and great experience," individuals "lose themselves." John explained that when people become stuck with being romantically in love, they become overly controlled by their emotions of elation or frustration. John did not believe that it was realistic for someone to be in a state of feeling "lost" for the rest of their life.

> I think romantic love is what we're kind of programed to associate why we get into relationships…is this initial kind of fantastical spark in which we fall head over heels for someone….It has the flair that nothing else matters. You just are completely consumed by this new partner, and will not be yourself….Instead, you are kind of grandiose and almost delusional in how important this person is to you in this moment, and nothing else matters, basically.

Romantic love loses its appeal to John when it starts to feel unattainable or unsustainable. When that happens, he said he would become wary, concerned that he might lose himself in the experience.

Connection: Intimate Bonding and Closeness

"That kind of fantasy feel." Mystery was an element of excitement that proved to leave John feeling both curious and exhausted. There was a pattern and shift in his desire for both security and predictability, as well as his hunger for unpredictability, adventure, and challenge.

> I wanted something just unpredictable I guess, and different—like foreign. I wanted something foreign. . . .That adds to the excitement as well….But yeah, as I got older, that's what I was pushing towards. I would try to…like the recent dates I remember leading up to my current relationship, was all like foreign, or not from Hawai'i, at least.

There was fun in the "not knowing" and unpredictability provided "momentum" in John's relationships. The unpredictability came from not knowing what kinds of reactions a girl would have to his jokes. Other times he was unsure of where the relationship was going because of the frequency of fights he had with some of his girlfriends. The unpredictability made his relationship sustainable since it provided momentum, but unsustainable because it caused so much chaos in his life.

> It wasn't a sustainable kind of love. It was like a fiery, passionate kind of love. Like argue, break up, get back together. But it wasn't something where I felt, "Wow, I am lucky." There was a lot of activity—arguing, breaking up, and then the constant in-and-outs. There was the momentum of "Hey, it's not really bad, so it must be pretty good right now." But instead [the relationship] was just "not bad," rather than [the relationship] being "good."

His discussions and fights with Girl-C were nothing like he had experienced with his previous girlfriends. There had been a degree of unpredictability that was distressing when he had dated Girl-B. Girl-C, however, was more of an enigma. He noted that he sometimes used sarcasm in situations where he wanted to relieve tension. Girl-B's response often depended on

her mood. In one situation, he made a sarcastic joke that was taken the wrong way and resulted

in her reacting by intentionally smashing his foot with her heel. Her reactions and their volatile

interactions were too overwhelmingly unpredictable.

> We would argue a lot because she was a very responsive, emotionally responsive person,
> to say that politically correct….We would just argue because our disagreements would
> escalate rapidly. She would just get really upset at me. I remember thinking, "This just
> isn't how a relationship should be."

> Girl-C provided a different kind of mystery. He was initially told that she was interested

in him, which eliminated the "chase factor."   However, there was a lot of mystery from not

knowing her and discovering she had amazing qualities that piqued his curiosity. However as

much as he wanted to discover the mystery, they were both waiting to see how much the other

person was interested in them. So, although there was no more chase factor, there was a mystery

in not knowing what she wanted.

> I didn't want to be too eager but also wanted to say, "I want to spend time with you.". . .I
> wanted her to say it first too sometimes so there would be that "back and forth" of how
> much she actually wanted to hang out with me.

> He was interested in exploring more great qualities but was not sure if she felt the same

way about him. He was planning to leave for college in less than a month of meeting each other

and their uncertainty of "what they were" or "what [would] happen," added energy to the

anticipation. The uncertainty of the development and progression of their relationship, in

addition to trying to read her, felt exciting and gave their early encounters "that kind of fantasy

feel."

> I think it was a little bit magical in that because we were away we could also idealize
> each other rather than it being a consistent physical interaction that would lead to our
> own opinions about each other. We were able to push the other person up in our minds.
> We would argue quite a bit on the phone but it had that energy to it: So once we'd argue,
> we would feel bad and when we stopped arguing, it felt good. It had that movement to it.

There were moments the relationship felt "really positive, like, oh my gosh, we love each other. This is great! We can be away from each other and it is going to be fine." Other times, however, the distance proved to be extremely difficult as the mystery created unpredictability that caused distress and ultimately led to fights. However, the fighting created a momentum in their relationship. The low moments or fighting in the relationship made the high moments feel better than expected.

The distance in their relationship resulted in the mystery of not knowing what it would be like to pursue something long distance and resulted in a lot of their relationship's "momentum." This distance for long periods of time created a level of mystery about the other person in that they filled in the holes or unknowns of their narratives about each other with idealized constructions. Their relationship was thus driven by mystery, became very "fantasized," and continued to be "honeymoon-ish" until it was not long-distance anymore.

How it made him feel about himself. John recognized that feeling some sense of gratification was a two-way street and required some level of reciprocated interaction with his girlfriends. Relationships can be challenging because getting the attention of another relies on the way they respond to the process of courtship. Typically, attention given by the other is out of one's control and determined by the desire of the other to give it to us. When a girl he was interested in him gave him that attention, John felt more validated.

For example, John's first love experience occurred when he was 15 years old, with a girl he noticed playing basketball. Without any conscious thought, John said he fell in love and felt the desire to have a relationship with her.

> We were at the same basketball clinic or something. I remember I just couldn't stop watching her play. I thought, "Oh, I'm in love with this girl." I didn't even know her really. But I remember that feeling of: "Wow! I got to find a way to talk to this human."

I tried to find a way to become friends with her friends. Like I was looking for all the commonalities possible.

Unfortunately, she had a boyfriend which added a "really big chase element" to their relationship. This was exciting since he had to "fight for it" or try "to figure out how to get something [he] wanted." His strong feelings and resulting happiness were due to the anticipatory joy he experienced in patiently waiting for her and succeeding in making something happen. Her recognition of him gave him the validation and reassurance that he was just as special to her as she was to him. The chase was not nearly as significant with his other relationships as it was with this first one. "Falling in love with her, it was more so the case of: "Wow. I didn't think she'd actually be interested in me. I wonder why she picked me?'"

This reassurance was threatened when she left for a trip to visit college sites. All that was validated and reassured during the chase could be jeopardized without her being physically next to him and he felt jealous.

John did not want to be the "typical 5'6" Asian dude" dating a girl who society considered to be a perfect match for him. It was therefore significant that the girl he always wanted (someone he would not have guessed would be his girlfriend) reciprocated the same feelings for him. Being with a girl out of the norm was exciting.

> I think I did need an ego boost or something. . . .I thought she was new and attractive and special. I think that was more of an ego thing. . . .I think I just liked that she liked me. . . .Falling in love with her was more so the chase of, "Wow. I didn't think she'd actually be interested in me. I wonder why she picked me?. . .I thought, "I'm cool." I felt like she was someone I would be proud to be seen with since other people thought she was attractive. . . .I was very excited. That made it last longer too, in a way, because I was insecure. . . .I was proud to show friends that I was dating her even if it wasn't even her [I was showing]. It was like a picture of her. That's a reflection of the substance of my investment in it.

Reassurance. Certain levels of endearment assured John that he was just as important to his significant others as they were to him. Moments of endearment, warmth, and affection were part of the basis for keeping the relationship alive. Affection was the core of what made his intimate relationships secure and sustainable.

Simple acts reminded them that him that he was thought of and special. Receiving affection indicated that he was a hot commodity. While the passion and intimacy might fade in a relationship, the warmth and genuine endearment communicated a more enduring sense of love. It indicated that although he might still be precious and have a central place in his significant other's heart, these simple acts of warmth, endearment, and affection were deeply appreciated. He acknowledged them as being significant in maintaining the feeling of being loved.

About the time John was returning to school, Girl-C spontaneously bought him the sequel to a book that he really enjoyed. He said he remembered feeling "very appreciative." He experienced her gesture as "very thoughtful." In that moment, he felt special and his perception of the time they spent together became more positive. Although she typically held back from disclosing her feelings for him, he felt reassured that she had feelings for him.

John noted that he received affection in his relationship with Girl-D, too. She sent him a video of *sakura* flowers blossoming with a message that said, "Oh, I'm by myself, but I thought of you.'" By sending him this video, he felt that she was expressing her feelings for him, that he was in her heart in the same way she was in his.

> And she filmed the river, and just waved at me. And then I remember thinking, "Oh, I actually do really love her." I think it was warmth. Like physiologically. Like safe and warm in that she was able to represent how she felt in maybe ten seconds of a video. . . . And that matched so much with how I was feeling, so I felt very understood as well. And it felt very mutual. And that's when I kind of…like allowed me to sink in more.

Reciprocity: Nourishment. John noticed he was experiencing romantic love when he discovered that he wanted to invest himself "into making something work." A lot of energy goes into a relationship. He used the analogy of having a job where if "you love your job, you want to invest the best you can in it to make it successful." There is a quality of feeling valued and then wanting to contribute, support, and invest your own part too, or even give a little bit of yourself to your partner. John said he valued being accepted, supported, and encouraged without being limited from being himself and hoped he could receive these elements in exchange for how much he put into the relationship.

> [I'm investing in] someone that would accept me and support me for who I am, and encourage me and not limit me, and let me be my own person, but also be that kind of like rock, and by my side kind of thing. And I thought that that's what I would receive by me certain things, and I think I didn't really feel [acceptance, support, and encouragement] a lot until my current partner.

John recognized that the same mystery he loved could also be a reflection of guardedness. He started to notice that Girl-C maintained a level of guardedness, was frequently closed off, never allowed herself to be vulnerable, and would push all the decision-making onto him. There was always a feeling that she was not telling him something, which made it difficult for him to understand her personality. John said he constantly felt "she was withholding something from [him] that [he] did not earn from her." Her guardedness resulted in John feeling disconnected and eventually losing that sense of endearment and respect for her.

John noticed his first negative reactions occurred when he began to notice a lack of reciprocity. John found himself waiting for video messages that had stopped coming. He attributed it to her being busier than he was. Although he was sad, he wanted to be supportive, and avoid being a burden to her by not forcing her to reciprocate his affectionate gesture.

In other instances, he talked about making an extra effort to spend time with her family or friends instead of with his. John felt he was integrating his life into hers. It made him happy to put himself into her life. He wanted to make the best of their time together when he was home from college, so he would put a lot of effort into "build[ing] stock for [their] time away from each other" and "pack[ing] in as much [time and effort] as he could" for her. However, he began to realize that his life was not being nourished as well.

John's fights and discussions with Girl-C revolved around her putting her needs before his. He said she became increasingly possessive of what was hers and had an unwillingness to collaborate or negotiate a solution that worked equally well for both of them. These fights would leave John feeling guilty. He wanted to be supportive and allow her to be herself. In addition, in his graduate program, he was learning to be unconditionally accepting which added to the gravity of their imbalance.

John noticed the lack of reciprocity and could not help but wonder why she would not be willing to immerse herself into his life as much as he was into her life. He believed that it spoke to how much she valued his feelings or how much she was willing to give to him; especially given the effort he had made to prioritize her needs over those of his friends and family. He noted that these experiences resulted in him feeling a level of anger or change in his character that was not typical of him. John explained that the lack of reciprocity and willingness to collaborate, to meet each other half way, became the plot of a lot of their deeper discussions.

Importance of being himself. John feels it is rare for partners in relationships to not have give-and-takes, sacrifices, and compromises. John feels that a relationship is a partnership and that sometimes compromise is necessary. To him, it is difficult to completely give up one's

desires or needs all the time. He felt that when this compromise was not achieved, he did not feel like he could be himself in this relationships.

John, for example, really wanted his freedom after his very "fueled" relationship with Girl-B. He felt very restrained and shackled by his college relationship with Girl-B which hindered his ability to continue discovering himself. He felt very controlled. Girl-B would get upset if he went out with friends or did not talk to her every night. This wore on him mentally and emotionally. It was thus very important for him to be able to hang out with his friends and do as he pleased on his own time. Now that he was not a part of that relationship, being in control of his own life was exactly what he wanted.

Girl-C "seemed very different from [his] previous relationships" and "allowed [him] to be [himself]." She gave him "a lot of flexibility with being [himself]" by allowing him to freely do simple things such as joking or going out with his friends. "She would never tell [him] not to go out or something whereas [his] other girlfriends would always tell [him] that [he] couldn't or wouldn't like it." He liked the "very different," dramatic change of how she treated him compared to Girl-B. He had never thought he could simultaneously be with someone while having this "feeling of freedom," and he really enjoyed it.

It was refreshing for John to finally feel he had a little more control over his life compared to his relationship with Girl-B who frequently demanded, "This is what I want, this is what I want, this is what I want." After asking her what she wanted, Girl-C would "always put it back" on him by saying, "It is up to you." This was a trait of Girl-C that John vividly remembers being significant since Girl-C consistently said, "'It is up to you, it is up to you, it is up to you'. . . . every step of the way." While it was a little unsettling or even slightly frustrating, John also felt it "gave [him] a lot of breathing room." It gave him the space he wanted and allowed

him to make decisions for himself. This was empowering and helped his feelings develop more strongly toward her.

John and Girl-C's relationship became sustainable because they each led their own separate lives. When John and Girl-C spent time with each other, for example, they would not talk as much since they would end up studying next to each other or would not stay near one another when spending time with family. The idea of "settling down" became more progressive toward the last one to two years of their relationship.

Comfortable. When John began meeting Girl-D exclusively for the first time, he said he wanted to impress her. He was concerned that he would be perceived or misjudged in an inaccurate light because of his tattoos and because he had arrived on his skateboard. To his surprise, he realized she appreciated his unique qualities. She was sincerely curious about him and his passions, in addition to wanting to genuinely get to know him without any intention of changing him.

> She did not see me as the typical aggressive person [and] recognized a part of me that went beyond my appearance. . . .She was interested to hear my thoughts about things, and I appreciated hearing her thoughts about things too. It felt like it transcended the stereotypical conversation.

Feeling unconditionally accepted is valued significantly. He noted that when he realized Girl-D accepted and wanted to know more about him that he realized he was beginning to have feelings for her. This feeling of acceptance "early on" in their relationship gave him the freedom to be himself. While this was not a conscious thought, these interactions with her helped him recognize that he had not received this in his previous relationships. The feeling was very different. He soon realized that he had not been able to genuinely be himself in a relationship, before. It was important for him to feel he did not have to be anyone but himself. He was able

to establish a connection with Girl-D with very little effort. Unconditional acceptance was something he never felt he had as he was always attempting to impress his past girlfriends.

Something Felt Wrong

John's relationship with Girl-C was not as volatile, explosive, unpredictable, or obvious as his relationship with Girl-B. This time, it was based on a feeling that he had within himself. This made it even more difficult to understand and follow through with breaking her heart. Nevertheless, his gut feeling was enough to want to end his relationship with her as early as their eighth month together.

> I would wake up [and] I would be like something doesn't feel right. Like, something doesn't feel right in my life and I didn't want to admit that it was [my relationships with Girl-C]. I felt like everything was so great, I think that we can work on it and then I remember coming to the conclusion like yeah, this has to end. But I didn't have my own ability to disappoint someone else in that time in my life. So instead of just ripping the band-aid off, I delayed and extracted it as long as possible and like I couldn't just be clear and firm with the boundaries.

Seeing her tears left a strong sense of guilt in him. His attempt changed the relationship in that she became more insecure knowing that he could leave at any time. To counter this insecurity, John felt a deeper sense of imbalance with respect to integrating his life into her life.

> Maybe I wanted to just not be a problem. I don't need to make a problem with this. I don't need to…like it's not that big of a deal. I'll just do it. That was like always my thinking. Like it's not a big deal. I can take it. It's not horrible, but it's just not myself.

Increased effort. John believes romantic love warps our perceptions about what kind of person we are. This can change us into someone who we are not or make us do things we would not normally do. John would invest his energy into his relationships and significant others because of the strong feelings he had for his partners.

> I invested in trying to make a relationship work by doing all these things that I don't think I would have done, if I wasn't with her. I didn't want to disappoint her, so it made me not spend time with people that I guess I really cared about . . . and I lost friends.

Less of him. Eventually, John's life became more and more emmeshed with Girl-C as their relationship progressed. The more their lives became emmeshed with each other, the harder it became to separate.

> I felt like I could be supportive, was valued, that she could come to me with [her] distress. I could support her but it began to wear at me so we kept busy doing our own things and always stayed in a relationship. Then, it just extended itself even though maybe I wasn't completely satisfied in it but I did not know that fully.

John cared about Girl-C and felt she was someone very important in his life. He did not often say, "I love you," and did not feel a sense of warmth when she said it to him. The act of saying these words felt more like a forced action on both their parts, similar to exclaiming a simple salutation such as, "Hi" or "Bye, love you," in conversation. John felt that their relationship was lacking endearment or feeling like they were both holding onto something precious. John said that a sense of affection or endearment was not a big part of their relationship and that is what he felt was missing for him.

Nevertheless, Girl-C still wanted him to be around more and there was an unspoken expectation for John to cater to her schedule. This restricted him from getting a lot of "me time" during the last year of their relationship. He would, for example, visit Girl-C when she was on her break at work in the evening or would coordinate dropping her off at work, where he might stick around to meet her on her break for dinner. When she was done with her shift, John would pick her up to go to her house. He would say, "Hi," to her parents and then they would watch a drama she enjoyed and wanted him to watch with her. He would then drive home after she fell asleep.

John started to feel like he did not have his own life. He started hoping she would sleep early so he could leave and "do [his] own thing," even wanting to work a lot more so he "could

have his own life away from her." He began looking forward to going to work because he would not have to pick her up or insert himself into her life. Since he "invested so much in [their] relationship," John realized he "did not have a lot of [his own hobbies]" other than things he would do with her. He also began to realize that he was not as close to his family anymore.

John and Girl-C's relationship remained stagnant. He continued to integrate his life with hers during the one to two years they spent together before she moved away for graduate school. John noticed a lot of problems in his life and felt something was wrong. An indication of this was his difficulty with managing his stress well. With Girl-C gone for graduate school, John had more time and space to start attending meditation classes, being more involved in yoga, exercising more frequently, and changing his diet. He felt he could finally have his own life and "could breathe again." "Wow, I'm actually taking care of myself for the first time," he thought. At this point, it was his autonomy and independence that gave him the space to care for himself.

A Sudden Realization: "In a Heartbeat"

Freedom. Approximately five years into the relationship, John "started to find [himself] as an individual" and feel more "differentiated from her." It was not even a month since Girl-C left for graduate school when John realized he did not look forward to her calls. He recognized that he was not in love anymore and he realized other parts of his life were more important than her. While these were things he noticed, a part of him continued to unconsciously deny his internal gut feelings. However, without Girl-C around, John began to "develop [his] own self," have his own interests again, and realize that he did not want to invest his entire self into *just* her anymore. He was ready to return to being his own self.

No regrets. Although his initial attempt to break up with Girl-C was difficult, John felt a sense of relief and had no regrets when he finalized his break up with her. He felt at peace

because he believed he finally had done something he wanted to do to take care of himself. He

had invested so much of his energy into Girl-C and their relationship in hopes that the energy

would be reciprocated, but it was to no avail. He had forgotten to take care of himself and had

hurt himself in the process. He said her angry texts in response to his break up served as more

evidence that she did not care about his life. It became clearer and clearer that the more he

talked to her, the more he realized this break up had been a healthy decision.

Once she was gone, he said he began to see that prolonging a break-up would not make

them hurt any less. John realized that waiting was just "prolonging an inevitably bad

experience." He explained that he realized he needed to be okay with her hating him to fix his

unhappiness.

> It was weird to be able to feel like I did the right thing but feel so *expletive* about it. But the main thing that stuck with me was that I felt stronger and more confident after that.

"Ben"

Ben is a 30-year-old, heterosexual graduate student who was born and raised in

Honolulu, Hawai'i. He is the younger of his older brother to twice divorced parents and was

primarily raised by his biological mother who remarried a third time.

Influences: Limited

Family and upbringing. Ben received limited exposure to romantic love between his

parents. Both his parents have been divorced twice, the second occurring between each other.

He believes this likely had some influence on his receptivity to seeing passionate, fiery, romantic

love.

The external influences in Ben's life gave him a better perspective on love since they

allowed him to be more pragmatically grounded in reality. He never really noticed many

passionate relationships as he was growing up. When he did or when it was more obvious that a couple was "all about each other," he perceived it as "odd," and noted that he felt "almost insecure because of how overt it was." Ben expressed his belief that couples should be secure with what they have and not necessarily have a need to show, display, or proclaim it in some way.

Love: "Rarely thought about it"

Ben stated that he "rarely conceptualizes" or thinks about the concept or meaning of "love." It is an experience he described as not something he has ever really thought about. While he noted that he had thought about what it means to be in a good relationship, he had not actively considered its meaning. He thought that perhaps not making a conscious effort to think about it might have causes him to overlook the experience. He noted, though, that he became more aware of his feelings after someone explicitly mentioned or asked him about it.

He admitted that he was not quite sure if romantic love existed. It was difficult to explain what it was like to be in love because he recognized the experience was different for everybody. He thought it was "this ambiguous thing," too personal for an individual to be able to comprehensively define it. He recognized that when people talked about love, they spoke from their own perspective and experiences, which could be considered universal in any sense.

He saw love as too complex and complicated to be precisely demonstrated in a film or described in words. Ben did not "remember a conversation or seeing something in a movie or someone else and then really being like, 'Oh, like, this is like a concept that I can get behind.'" Instead, he admitted not "think[ing] about the term much" because rather than thinking about it, he preferred being in the present moment with his partner as much as he could. He said he did not want to allow others, like the media, to influence his concept and experience of how love

should be experienced. Instead, he wanted to come into his own understanding of the experience.

Ben described experiencing romantic love as having strong feelings of affection for someone with whom you are in a long-term relationship. He also believed that it was a quality of love that slowly happened over many years.

Ben said he did not believe marriage was unnecessary when it came to being in love. He described *love* as being in the moment, having a connection with that other individual, sharing experiences, and feeling good about yourself, while being able to be open and comfortable.

Connection: Intimate Bonding and Closeness

Spark. Ben remembered a time, though, when he felt he really loved a girl and that these feelings emerged in a very short period of time. After meeting Girl-X, Ben remembers thinking, "Oh my God, I love this girl. I'm crazy. Crazy in love with this person. And she's super beautiful, we get along really well, we're really good friends, we're great socially, the sex is really good. Everything is really, really good" and he was "bursting with all the good stuff about the relationship."

As wonderful as it was, though, Ben recognized he "couldn't really acknowledge her lack of the connection on her side." Having the hot and fiery passionate feelings he felt with Girl-X kept him from recognizing the lack of connection she may have been feeling. To Ben, love, especially when "volatile and explosive," was an experience that could bring people closer together, albeit blurring one's perception of reality. This resulted in only heartbreak and a "whole ordeal." This passionate and fiery experience is what he said he associated with romantic love.

I fell crazy in love with this one girl, and it became really clear that she wasn't as into me as I was to her. Well, it is clear now. But at the time I was kind of following, hoping, and not really acknowledging [her] side or the reciprocal nature of the relationship. So I was just bending over backwards, getting really hurt, and feeling like I was just really emotionally all over the place.

Ben believes the "spark" is important and plays a role in the sustainability of a relationship but it is not necessary to have that at the very beginning. He defined the spark as something with the function of changing what someone wants their day-to-day to look like. Ben said that he knew the spark was there whenever he began wanting to incorporate someone into more parts of his life than he would if it was a relationship with someone with whom he *just* got along. This spark would grow and develop over time as he got to know and become more intimate with the girl.

In his relationship with Girl-Y, Ben said he never had "any of those initial crazy feelings" but the "spark" developed eventually over time. Although there was no "it" factor, Ben felt he was just willing to give it a chance. He noted that things got better and were enhanced as time and the relationship moved forward. He remembered inadvertently reflecting on his relationship [with Girl-Y], thinking about how good it was and how different it was compared to what he had previously experienced. In that moment, he "sort of not necessarily in a defeated way, sort of conceded to be[ing] in love." Prior to that, he said he may have just been resistant.

Compatibility. No matter what kind of attraction or interest Ben had experienced in past relationships, he said he had learned that he could never be quite sure what might be revealed later in the relationship. Taking it slowly gave him time to get to know his partners, recognize how he could relate with them, and determine if they were right for each other.

Ben thought relationships were not worth having once compatibility and connection between partners became challenged and problems did not appear to get resolved. He believed that people stayed in relationships for too long and entered marriages too quickly.

> Maybe it'll change as I age or whatever, but I feel like a lot of it is people's need to be validated and be shown that they're worthwhile. So, they force themselves to get a relationship or stay in a relationship where it's really just them that they have an issue with and that they need to fix that relationship [with themselves] first. I think there's something to be said about staying with someone and then trying to make it work and things of that nature. But I think at a certain point, people are just not compatible enough for a lifelong relationship. I feel like people need to be looking at those things more.

Ben noticed changes in Girl-W's behavior over the span of their relationship. She began to skip classes, miss school, and act differently when she was intoxicated. He had difficulty accepting her new behaviors which made them more and more incompatible over time. "She would just become someone that [he] didn't really enjoy being around." Recognizing his discomfort with her changes, Ben made attempts to have a conversation with her about this, but she "wasn't really receptive." Not only did it become an unpleasant relationship, but it also made it easier for him to lose interest in her. For that reason, he was ready to disconnect from her and "it just came to a point where it had to end."

Similarly, in another example, Ben talked about noticing qualities in Girl-Y that had started to impact his satisfaction in the relationship. Ben noticed that Girl-Y had difficulty accepting people into her life, ranking others in a particular hierarchy, and considering many to be beneath her. This made it difficult for her to create and maintain connections with many of his friends. Because she struggled to connect with his friends, it became less fun and easy to go out, whether it was with or without her. Ben noticed that if she did accompany him to spend time with his friends, he would worry about what her interactions with his friends would be like. What started as an effort not to force a connection between his friends and her evolved into not

wanting to bring her along when he went out with his friends. This slowly chipped away at the quality of their relationship.

> I try and be tolerant, and understanding, and patient, and things like that, and I guess I knew that you didn't have to be the same person as your significant other. But I think part of me gave that a little too much leeway and patience, and just kind of started to see how that would work out. It ended up being kind of like a slow grind away from me caring about her the way I originally did.

He realized he "wasn't really compatible in the relationship and had to be a little bit of 'something else.'" This restricted him from being able to "fully express [him]self." Ben was mindful to be patient and work on unconditionally accepting her quirks and traits. However, this came at the cost of his own happiness. He began noticing that his life was changing in ways that were not bad, but also did not make him particularly happy. His life was becoming stagnant and he recognized the need for change if their relationship was to continue. Something was missing, and although he did not know what it was yet, he recognized that he was not happy anymore either.

> I don't know. It was just a feeling. I can't really articulate it too well. I just knew that I wasn't happy anymore. I just felt like I was sort of trapped. There wasn't any growth. I thought that things were stagnant. I felt like we were in a routine that sort of wasn't bringing anybody any happiness, but we were so used to it that we just weren't doing anything about it. . . .

Ben described himself as "that guy" who was "sort of always in a long-term relationship. . . .going from one to the other." He noted that once he entered high school, though, a part of him may have started looking for something else, something he had never really been exposed to by his parents.

> I was looking for maybe an example of someone who could stay with me, but I don't think I was consciously thinking about what love is.

Ben remembered his first relationship with Girl-U in high school being pleasant. He had positive memories of being around her at school, going out together, and being noticed as a

"couple" since it was looked at as the "cool thing." At the same time, though, he recognized

their connection was at some level, superficial, and they never made attempts to know each other

on a deeper level.

Although their relationship lasted for a year, Ben noted that he never experienced being

in love with her. He also did not remember hearing her express feeling a certain special way

about him. The relationship was mostly physically driven and Ben noted that he became

disinterested quickly because of how dissimilar they were from one another. While he

recognized that their diverging paths were an indication that they were both discovering more

about themselves and changing, it was also a test of their willingness to accept the other's

differences unconditionally.

> I just wasn't interested in it anymore. . . .I think that we were developing different
> interests. The things I wanted to spend my time doing weren't what she wanted to spend
> her time doing.

His subsequent relationship with Girl-W succeeded because it was more than a physical

relationship. As their relationship progressed into their freshman year of college, Girl-W would

miss class in an effort to see him. While he enjoyed her efforts to see him, she began to become

more "dependent" and put him in the center of her own world. He began to feel uncomfortable

and noted that he was becoming less enthusiastic about her visits.

> I want someone that has their own life and career. I definitely want to be involved with
> that person to a high degree, but I think part of me is resistant to be the center of
> anybody's world because I feel like that's not how people grow and progress. I feel like
> you can exist in someone else's world, in a very strong way, but I want someone to be
> strong themselves, have a career, be driven, be able to exist without me. I don't want
> someone who's hyper-dependent or things like that. I really pride people's ability to
> maintain their self without needing constant validation or things like that.

Ben's feelings for Girl-Y was calmer than they had been with Girl-X. They did not get

into many fights or argue about much of anything. Their relationship was very neutral even after

moving in together which was tested when they were placed in situations where they were forced to make many compromises and learn a lot about each other. Generally, Ben felt his relationship with Girl-Y reflected the qualities he learned he valued and wanted after experiencing his previous relationships.

Their daily routine became repetitive, and although they lived with each other, they still led very different, independent lives. Although the lack of fighting was a highlight of their relationship, Ben noticed that they just were not really interacting as much as they once had. They began to enter a routine of "just spinning our wheels."

Ben spoke at length about the importance of getting to know one another. He believed that this was essential to falling in love with someone or having a "real moment" of bonding. He thought it was "insane" for people to get married after only six months of being together. He also believed that many ignore their incompatibilities because they feel they have to deal with each other's bad sides, with the thought that things will work out eventually and be great. To him, people may ignore these factors which results in marriages made prematurely and leading to many divorces. He thought that marriage was something people should do only after they have acquired a better understanding of who they were, what they want (for themselves and in their partner), and their goals. He noted that a few of his friends had chosen to be with their partners for what he considered "a while" before getting married. Like them, he said he planned on really getting to know his partner before tying any knot.

Excitement. Ben described having strong, intense, and passionate feelings for Girl-X. Ben noted that his interest in and attraction for Girl-X was emotional. In the heat of his feelings, Ben felt he gave all of himself to her. In fact, he said he felt like he "lost himself" in the relationship.

That level of excitement was important for Ben. Ben and Girl-Y moved in together after being with each other for a year. He described it being much like a "pseudo-marriage, living together, playing house kind of thing" for him which added a lot of excitement to their relationship. Moving in was fun because it was a new thing and they got to create or make their own space together. What made him happiest and most excited was that it was something he could do together with her. Sharing this experience and compromising on decisions brought excitement to their relationship.

> Before we would just live or stay at my place, and then we'd choose something to do together or we'd choose what to watch or choose where to go or whatever. Whereas, when you move into a new place you make these decisions together, I guess, or we did at least. It was an interesting experience to see how we would work together or compromise on things.

Getting a puppy and raising it together brought them even closer as a couple. The new experience of raising a puppy made their relationship very exciting, especially since it was his first time with a puppy. Thus, the events in his relationship with Girl-Y proved to be lively as they were put in a situation where they were forced to not only collaborate and compromise with each other, but also proved some level of compatibility with one another.

> It was interesting, and I got to see her ideas of how long we could leave the dog, or how she would walk the dog, or what the rules would be, and versus what mine were, and trying to compromise on that kind of stuff.

It was these experiences that made his romantic love feel more intense. It contributed to the excitement which added to his feelings of being genuinely in love.

Something different. Ben noted that one of the things that attracted Ben to Girl-Y was her intelligence and having a "kind of quirky weirdness" that she seemed to be "really comfortable with." Girl-Y was endearing, fun to be around, and really enjoyable. He liked that she seemed to really want to have "strong and genuine connections," regardless of how difficult

it was for her to do so. Further, he appreciated her being open and comfortable talking about her own insecurities which showed a willingness to show her own vulnerability.

In addition, there was something wholesome and refreshing about being in a relationship with someone who cared about him. His relationship with Girl-Y began "explosive[ly]," but transformed into a genuinely caring one. Girl-Y supported Ben by creating a space in which he could talk freely, even if it meant unreasonably putting himself down now and then. Not only did she allow him to speak his mind, she also provided him with the support he was looking for while giving him both his space to be independent and accepting him as he was. He knew she cared about him because she would verbally express it, something his previous girlfriends had not done. To this day, he still acknowledges how this affected how difficult it was for him to leave her. "It's what drew me to stay, initially, I guess."

> I can just be honest and open about who I am. I don't know. It's really enjoyable. . . .Just the fact that I can speak openly and honestly about how I'm feeling and who I am. . . .Anytime I would unnecessarily put myself down, or make myself seem worse than I was, or that I wasn't good enough and whatever at school and all that kind of stuff, and like in general, she would always be supportive. But not just like, "What are you talking about? That's crazy. Get over it." She would let me speak and things like that.

Ben remembered being hesitant at first about Girl-Y. She was attractive, but there was something different about her, something he was "unsure" of. She was not the "typical style of girl" (e.g., in terms of physique, style, and how she carried herself) he had dated before. He felt that giving a girl who was "a little different" a chance added to feelings of excitement and romantic love. He felt that the differences, however, also were the first cause of falling out of love as well.

As he entered into his relationship with Girl-Y, Ben remembers having desires and expectations he had not had in prior relationships. He started "looking down the road a little bit

to see where [he] would be." He wondered whether that "may [have been]…a dumb thing to do." Girl-Y was the first girlfriend who was "way smarter" than him, really dedicated to her education and career path, and who had a lot of dedication to the field. She was around a lot of people who also were like that and many of her friends were similar to her. "It was a really cool experience" and something different than what he had grown accustomed to. He began to think about all the good things that were happening and what he wanted his future to look like.

Effort: Feeling unheard. Ben spent a lot of time contemplating and determining what he wanted and needed from Girl-Y in order for the relationship to work. He could see the changes that needed to happen but could not do it without her. Although Girl-Y listened to his concerns, she did not follow up with actions indicating a desire to work on these issues. This contributed to his growing loss of hope in their relationship. Girl-Y could not recognize their incompatibilities which was evidenced by her inability to follow through and consciously act on making a change happen. Over time he noticed he became more and more upset at things that had never bothered him as much before.

> You can always work on it, but sometimes you just see that no one's changing or that someone's not willing to change or someone's not willing to do something or the situation itself isn't really helping. It's not like there's an unchangeable moment, but that change doesn't happen.

"I don't know if I'm feeling this"

Ben said he believed people tolerate basic personality traits to a certain extent, with the underlying belief that they are very happy. Soon enough they eventually realize, Ben explains, "Wait, I've actually really been really unhappy for a long time, and it's shown itself in other ways." Ben feels that many people avoid everything they *do* see or notice, and try to look past it when really, "all of it is still there" sitting right in front of them.

Eventually Ben began to have "a feeling" and to question whether the "it" factor had ever been there. Slowly, there were moments he would acknowledge not feeling the same connection he and Girl-Y had developed earlier in the relationship. He ignored his indifference and cooling emotions. Allowing their relationship to move more slowly allowed their relationship to develop and give it a chance to survive.

> There were things in the beginning, the first couple of weeks, the first three months, where I was like, "I don't know if I'm feeling the 'it' factor or the connection factor or whatever." Some of it was on an emotional level, some of it was on a physical level, and things like that. I was kind of like slow rolling into that. . . I was just kind of like, "Oh yeah, this is good I guess." I acknowledged some of like, "I don't know if I'm feeling this" or "I don't know if I'm feeling that." There was never necessarily that spark. But I also kind of just ignored [these feelings] and let myself develop in the relationship (as opposed to romantically being super volatile and explosive). I was just moving a lot slower or just letting things go.

> **Noticed by others.** Ben remembers having a conversation with his mother around that

time. When he voiced his concerns about how he was feeling, he remembers his mother saying, "Just don't break her heart." However, Ben realizes others likely have the ability to see what was happening before he could see it for himself, like he was "giving off the energy or vibe."

Realization: "At That Point"

He contemplated staying with her, but felt he would be stuck in an unhappy relationship forever. He realized no amount of work could support their incompatibilities. He decided "there [was] no working on it anymore."

> I think that people are too willing to ignore that nothing's changing or that it's not getting any better and they just convince themselves otherwise so that it seems like they want to stay because it's easier that way….At what point do you just say that this is not worth it, because I probably could have stayed in a relationship with her for a while longer, you know? Like a good while longer, but would things have gotten worse? Would things have gotten better? Would things have stayed the same? I can't really say, but at that point, to me, it was just like that was enough for me to say that this isn't worth it.

Ben needed mutual receptivity, communication, and openness about problems in the relationship. In his current relationship, one of the best facets has been that if either of them have an issue or concern that needs to be discussed, they are both "really able to have a super productive conversation."

> No one gets upset. No one gets hurt about anything. We can get a little bit emotional and maybe feel a little bit mad about something, but every time we have one of those talks, there's significant improvement. . . .We just are genuinely happier in all aspects of the relationship, after we have a productive conversation or see we can be open about things. That's really nice.

It is important for Ben that he can be honest with himself about who he is. By being honest, Ben has been able to be comfortable, connect with his partner, and share experiences. The reaction to a loss of these components has proven to put a wrench in his relationships and jeopardize the feelings he has had for his partners.

Commonalities and Variations

Commonalities

Despite their varied backgrounds, families, and communities, there were several areas of commonality or overlapping experiences of falling out of romantic love.

Lessons learned. Each relationship served as a lesson for the next relationship. These lessons taught the participants something that helped them determine and find a more lasting relationship when the right person came along.

Romantic love has a very fluid definition and may be considered one of the most difficult concepts to define. Its definition differs across cultures and may even change over the course of a person's life. Initially, falling out of romantic love was considered a failure, but over time it facilitated both participants in looking at the deepest parts of themselves. Whether it was conscious or unconscious, it helped them to discover something about themselves that helped

them to move forward and achieve much better relationships in their lives. Each relationship informed the next, supporting them in discovering an increasing sense of fulfillment.

Giving it a chance. Participants were able to identify and recognize specific and significant characteristics about their partners from the very beginning of the relationship. They were similar in that they considered some characteristics as quirks or even faults but were able to look past them. They noticed that some things that could have bothered them, did not initially. However, over time, they were not able to look past these traits and "faults" anymore.

Something did not feel right. Both participants described the moment when they began falling out of romantic love in terms of a felt sense that something did not feel right. When the relationship began to shift, participants admitted that they initially ignored the signs. This functioned as a way to protect themselves from the difficulty of dealing with a failing relationship. They felt something was wrong but did not want to face it.

Complacency. Both participants noted that they had not expected to be in the honeymoon phase forever. They recognized that while the spark and excitement were important in discerning whether to pursue a relationship or not, those fluffy feelings did not last forever. Understanding that those feelings did not last helped both of them to avoid disappointment. This, in turn, helped them persevere in seeking to create a more supportive and longer lasting relationship with their partners. Eventually, this led to a sense of comfort, a sense of stability and groundedness.

Over time, though, the relationship began to feel less satisfying and a sense of emptiness began to emerge. Both participants discussed how their unhappiness emerged from what seemed like nothing in particular. There were no major fights or screaming matches, no infidelities, so

the participants stayed. It was comfortable, predictable, albeit passionless. They noticed they were not looking forward to or excited about their future with their partners.

The participants described the process of falling out of love as a growing awareness of lost potential. The intensity of the relationship and the dreams of a future together slowly and gradually faded, until the relationship dissolved.

Doubt and confusion. The participants talked about how they had invested so much of themselves and spent a lot of time building something special with their partners, only to find themselves moored with doubts and uncertainties. At the same time, they noticed their partners' lives were planned around their lives and there was ample evidence that their partners deeply loved them, so they thought it would be ridiculous to blow up a great relationship based on such an uncertain feeling. They kept their thoughts to themselves and continued in the relationship. Their perceptions of their partner's growing dependencies on them and the relationship, though, led them to re-examine their own perceptions that they were falling out of romantic love.

Further, participants shared their experience of guilt as they contemplated breaking their partners' hearts. Once more they hesitated. They were not ready to communicate their feelings since they knew it would result in hurting their partners for whom they still cared. Knowing how much their partners were invested in the relationship and not wanting to hurt them made it difficult to acknowledge that they were truly falling out of love. This caused them to ignore many of the red flags and continue putting in effort to making their relationships work. Dealing with it became easier than ending things or starting over.

A chore. Participants shared that they eventually felt like everything involving their partner was becoming a chore. Tasks including their girlfriends became more of a "have to" rather than "want to" event. Eventually, simple activities like making room in their schedules,

hanging out with their girlfriends, or even answering their calls felt like an obligation rather than part of a desire to be closer.

Apathy. Suddenly, participants realized they did not miss their partners anymore. Suddenly, they did not care. They noticed that they wanted to spend time with other people, regardless of their partners being there or not. In some cases, there were even times when they preferred their partners not come with them. Participants realized that every day was a lie. They were pretending to love their partners. This was a lie to themselves and ultimately their significant others.

Trapped and restricted. Participants noted that as they began falling out of love, they started feeling trapped. They made attempts to discuss their needs and feelings with their partners, but struggled to communicate their pervasive sense of "emptiness." Since there was nothing concrete they could attribute the feeling to, it was challenging to planfully address this growing problem as a couple's issue. Participants reported that the lack of movement with respect to the problem left them feeling trapped in their relationships. Eventually they reframed the problem in terms of a personal issue and concluded that they were only trapping themselves since it was their decision to stay.

Both participants noted that one of the biggest challenges for them was accepting that a relationship did not have to be bad for it to be unfulfilling for one of the partners. In the absence of typical red flags like gridlock problems, constant bickering, or infidelities, they were left with a chronic sense of confusion, exhaustion, and frustration. Unable to solve this problem, they began to lose confidence in themselves. Their lives became a series of routines and daily schedules, hobbies, and familiar people, but they were not happy and did not like themselves in their relationships as well.

Variation

  The differences in the participants' experiences may reflect each participant's idiosyncrasies. It may also shed light on experiences of falling out of romantic love that are less common but no less significant in terms of understanding the range and complexity of this phenomenon.

  Background and culture. Although participants were similar in age, geographical location, gender, sex, and sexual orientation, they differed significantly in culture and values. The participants also came from different familial structures (remarried versus married), racial/ethnic upbringings, and had different values or hopes for the future.

  Distance. Both participants had different experiences with respect to distance and proximity. They differed in how far apart they were while falling in and out of romantic love with their partners. While Ben had moved in with some of his partners, John had attempted several relationships at a distance. One of his romantic partners even resided in a different country.

  Break-up attempt. A third difference between John and Ben involved their experiences of break-up attempts with their partners. John's experience of not being able to carry through with breaking up with his partner caused her distress and created an insecurity that changed the dynamics of the relationship. Because of this, new factors and responsibilities were created and ultimately caused new tensions in the relationship that affected his level of relational satisfaction.

  Signs and triggers. Both participants acknowledged the importance of a "spark" in the initial stages of their relationships, they both acknowledged that maintenance of that spark was not necessarily indicative of falling out of romantic love. They noted other signs that had resulted in them seeking a dissolution of their relationship. For one participant, a sign that he

was falling out of romantic love was that his partner was getting on his nerves a lot. For the

other participant, falling out of romantic love was associated with feeling apathetic and

emptiness.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine and discover the experience of falling out of romantic love from the perspective of unmarried American males, who were born and raised in Hawaiʻi, using a transcendental phenomenological design. *Romantic love* was provisionally defined as having a deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual recognition and regard for the value of another person and relationship which may generate many powerful feelings (Grayson, 2001). As the study unfolded, the participants described falling in love as a process of finding an intimate connection with someone else in a way that fosters the potential of both partners. Falling out of romantic love involved something less tangible. It began with a nagging feeling that something was wrong which ultimately led to a growing sense of emptiness.

This study explored the experiences of falling in and out of romantic love for two men and the meanings they ascribed to these events. The study's findings suggest the elusive nature of the phenomenon and how the process of falling in and out of romantic love is based more than tangible behavioral interactions and incompatible belief systems. Participants' report of their romantic relationships reflect the concepts described and discussed in the literature reviewed in this dissertation.

The Experience of Falling Out of Romantic Love

The phenomenological experience described by the participants had a clear beginning, middle, and end. Romantic love was characterized by an investment that was different, more intimate than friendships or familial bonds. It often began with "a spark," but could also develop more gradually and unexpectedly. Over time, they established a routine, formed and maintained a connection, and began to experience a sense of joy, happiness, and excitement. But in some

relationships, they encountered an unexplainable shift characterized by a pervasive sense of emptiness, self-doubt, guilt, and confusion. Initially, they persevered, continuing to chase their fantasy of an idealized relationship. But, eventually, the feeling of emptiness became so overwhelming that they realized they did not want to be in the relationship anymore.

Connection: Intimate Bonding and Closeness

Participants characterized their initial romantic connections as being full of excitement and the anticipation of experiencing something new and different. Once feelings of being in love were accepted, participants began to seek ways of establishing and maintaining a connection with their partners. The desire for frequent physical and intimate bonding and closeness was a sign of the purity of how they perceived the experience of romantic love. Whether it was spending a significant amount of time with their partners, spending all day, every day in each other's company, talking on the phone for endless hours, or even moving in with each other, participants acknowledged that this emergent feeling of affection for another played a key role in their experience.

Though some models previously discussed in this research talked about the importance of intimacy such as sex in romantic love, participants in this study voluntarily omitted such disclosures on the importance of sex in their romantic relationships. Because the topic of sex never entered the conversation, the researcher initiated the topic. This led to a brief discussion about the importance of sex in the relationship. However, they did not disclose or recount how sex was important or how it played a role in their experience of being romantically in love. The minimal disclosure of sex and intimacy does not support Hendrick, Hendrick, Foote, and Slapion-Foote's (1984) study on men's value of intimacy and sex in relationships, as described earlier in the literature review. It is not clear whether these findings had to do with immersion, cultural

factors, or my pre-existing relationships with both participants or were indicative of an actual challenge to the extant literature.

Modern technology. Participants spoke of how social media had changed the way individuals begin, maintain, and end relationships. With the help of modern technology (and social media), relationships can be established and sustained from a physical distance. Geographical distance is perceived as a challenge to romantic relationships. There is a commonly held belief that long-distance relationships are difficult and likely to fail (Helgeson, 1994; Sahlstein, 2004). However, Dargie, Blair, Goldfinger, and Pukall (2014) found that there were no significant differences between long-distance and geographically close relationships. This suggests that individuals in long distance relationships are not necessarily at a disadvantage in relationship success and satisfaction (Dargie, Blair, Goldfinger, & Pukall, 2014).

In fact, another study found that distance can enhance intimacy in a relationship because the distance enhances some types of communication. They found that long distance relationships allow couples to disclose more about themselves in their communication interactions and thus contribute to couples feeling closer to one another (Crystal Jiang & Hancock, 2013). Kelmer, Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman (2012) supported this finding and found that those in long distance relationships reported "lower levels of problematic communication" and "less minor psychological aggression" towards their partners (p. 10).

On the other hand, the myriad of options offered by social media may become overwhelming to those who are seeking an exclusive relationship. It has affected the courtship process in that it can now occur almost entirely over the internet and reduce the incentive to make a commitment to any person. Someone can engage in multiple relationships at one time, which can make it difficult to give full attention to one relationship and determine if it could

progress and become something meaningful. Having a large selection of relationship candidates

also promotes a false sense of what someone can provide and limit one from having a fulfilling

relationship in the future.

Fantasy bond. "John" talked about his struggles in finding intimacy in one of his

relationships. He mentioned that his partner never seemed to be willing to share or be vulnerable

with him. He described it as constantly feeling that "she was withholding something from [him]

that [he] did not earn from her." Her guardedness resulted in him feeling disconnected and

losing that endearment and respect for her.

How close is too close, though? A common struggle in relationships can be a fantasy

bond. A *fantasy bond* is an illusion of fusion which can originally be formed with a parent or

primary caregiver (Firestone, 2017). Theoretically, individuals may perceive not just connecting

with their caregivers, but also being one with them which acts as a defense to alleviate emotional

distress or pain when they feel unsafe (Firestone, 2017). The fantasy of being connected with

another helps a child cope with existential realizations and fears.

Being in love is in no doubt considered volatile and exciting, however at the same time it

can be frightening. Firestone (2017) suggested that some individuals fear abandonment and

intimacy, become self-protective, and terrified of being alone, especially if they have suffered a

lack of love in their early lives (Firestone, 2018). Their emotional dilemma encourages them to

form a fantasy bond that replaces the substance of the loving relationship with the idea of

becoming one unit with their partner. When an individual becomes a unit with his or her partner,

that individual can keep a safe and comfortable emotional distance while giving them a false

sense of security.

The participants in this study reported common characteristics reported in the extant research on fantasy bonds. A fantasy bond, or the illusion of connection and closeness, may be created when one or both partners replace the core of real relating with the form of being one unit. Firestone (2018) explains that the most significant sign that such a bond has been established is when one or both partners give up "vital areas of personal interest, their unique points of view and opinions, their individuality, to become a unit, a whole." The process of attempting to find security in an illusion of merging with another person results in a progressive loss of identity and find life increasingly hollow and empty as they give up aspects of themselves (Firestone, 2018).

Because partners now share an identity with each other, they begin to overstep boundaries, do things out of habit or expectation instead of from passion, control one another, and show less respect for each other's autonomy and independence (Joyce, 2017). This destructive coupling "functions to perpetuate feelings of distrust, self-hating thought processes, and the inward behavior patterns that each person brings to the relationship" (Firestone, 2018). The behaviors that result from this connection run along a continuum but limit the ability for someone to relate with their partner and establish a loving connection (Firestone, 2018; Firestone, 2017; Joyce, 2017).

The Heaviness of Emptiness

Participants reported feeling an untriggered sense that "something didn't feel right" at the point when they began to fall out of romantic love. Feeling unsure and unaware of what was occurring, participants attempted to try everything they could to stay in love but discovered that they could not bring back the feelings they once had. They spent much of the time attempting to make sure they were not prematurely leaving the relationship on just an intuitive feeling, alone.

Participants questioned whether or not they were falling out of romantic love. This resulted in feeling conflicted about their decisions to leave the relationship, especially if the y thought their partners would be wounded by the breakup. They were also conflicted because they still cared about their partners and did not want do harm them. They understood that relationships may have slumps, so questioned whether more effort, appreciation, motivation, and hope might save the relationship.

The confusion of participants led to an ultimate disregard and avoidance of the feelings they were experiencing. What is interesting is that throughout the retelling of their stories, participants expressed their narrative of falling in and out of romantic love through the lens of the experience of the relationship itself as opposed to their awareness of their own emotional actuality. In their narrative, participants reported not being able to identify being in love in the moment. Rather, they described their feelings of falling in romantic love for their partners as sneaking up on them. Similarly, awareness of not being in romantic love anymore was evident to the participants during moments when they felt they could not be in the relationship anymore. It is unclear if it was the confusion that caused this or if falling in love facilitates partners in becoming an "us," so when the decoupling begins, it is difficult to experience it in "I" terms.

These experiences are related to the presented literature review indicated earlier. Herbert (2015) proposed the concept of motivational distortion, or the ability to often distort reality to validate the emotional response one needs or desires. In addition, Lemay and Clark (2015), presented earlier in the review, theorized that people's desire to bond to another in a close committed relationship could be so strong that it could bias thinking, making it difficult for them to see and believe what they did not want to be true (Herbert, 2015; Lemay & Clark, 2015). The experiences expressed in the narratives are similarly supported by these theories in that the

participants' romantic feelings may have altered their perceptions of reality, contributing to more confusion when their rose-colored glasses were removed.

Emotional intelligence. Emotionally intelligent people can distinguish their own (and other's) emotions, differentiate and label feelings, use information to inform thinking and behavior, and manage emotions to adapt to environments and attain certain goals (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence (EI) is a relatively new topic, with initial discussion in the 1960s and research beginning since the 1990s. It refers to a set of emotional abilities that predict success above and beyond general intelligence; better social, familial, and intimate relationships; and a better psychological well-being (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005).

Emotional intelligence (EI) should assist with successful navigation through emotion-filled romantic situations. Brackett et al. (2005) found that married couples with higher EI scores (whether it be high for at least one partner) reported having more satisfaction and happiness in their relationships. Their research indicated that those with lower scores reported lower relationship quality, with higher conflict and maladaptive relationship behaviors. Brackett et al. (2005) further found that individuals may choose their partners based on having similar emotional intelligence scores, although it is possible that the emotional intelligence of partners may converge over time.

While this phenomenological study reflected the experience of falling out of love, it also shed light on factors that may have played a role on the experience. Participants shared qualities of the experience including something unexplainable not feeling right. What ensued was a pervasive sense of doubt, confusion, and apathy. While it is unclear what the participants' levels

of emotional intelligence were, awareness of this characteristic might help couples to continue reaching for each other during disconnecting impasses.

Sex differences in emotional intelligence. Research was conducted to review the relationship between EI and gender. Brackett, Mayer, Warner (2004) found that females got profoundly higher scores than males in emotional intelligence, but that emotional intelligence was a more eminent predictor in men's life including alcoholism and illegal drugs, deviant behavior, and weakness in relationships. Naghavi, Redzuan, and Mansor (2010) produced similar results, finding EI to be correlated with "self-respect and hidden anxiety," with girls having significantly higher overall "emotional intelligence, emotional understanding skill, regulation and utilization" than boys. Other notable research has indicated that women score higher on measures of emotional intelligence than men (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999; Mayer & Geher, 1996).

These studies suggest that the participants of this study may have had a slightly more difficult time in their abilities to recognize or identify the emotional states throughout the relationship contributing to their profound difficulties articulating their long-term sense of distress and confusion.

Emotional expression. *Emotional expressions* include the verbal and non-verbal behaviors that communicate an emotional or affective state and can occur with or without self-awareness (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991). Scharfe (2000) speculated that boys and girls learn different lessons in controlling their emotions. Parents give more information about feelings to their daughters (Scharfe, 2000). Because females on average gain a mastery of language faster than boys, they are thus able to express their emotions in more skillful ways. A lack of emphasis on emotional expression leaves boys at higher risk for being unaware of their

and others' emotional states and responding in more physical ways (Scharfe, 2000). Girls eventually develop a higher level of skill in "artistic" aggressive techniques such as revengeful gossiping or indirect avenging (Scharfe, 2000).

One participant of this study, for example, recounted a time when he was unaware of the feelings that were emerging but realized it might have been noticeable to others based on his behaviors. Individuals may have conscious control of their emotional expressions, but do not need conscious control of the emotional state to behave a certain way (i.e., express an emotion). Thus, although someone may feel unable to control feeling angry, they can potentially control the way they behave and what they do with that anger.

Participants expressed having difficulty finding ways to express and communicate having non-positive feelings. Sommers (1984) found that expressing negative emotions may be judged to be less likeable, less social, and less popular. Sommers' study, however, was conducted 1) in a context in which the reactions to the negative emotions did not allow for the possibility of a relationship to form, 2) in a context in which respondents were already in distressed relationships, or 3) in a context in which the negative emotion expression might have been a sign of an enduring propensity to express negative emotion. Thus, there is a need to explore these findings further through replications of the study (Bell, 1978; Sommers, 1984).

Because emotions are tied to our needs, it is important that our emotions can be expressed so that our needs are being met (Greenberg, 2011). This can only be done when the listener is attuned and can thus be responsive to the other's welfare. Graham, Huang, Clark, and Helgeson (2008) found that expressing negative emotions is associated with positive relationship outcomes. This includes elicitation of support, building of new close relationships, and heightening intimacy in the closest of relationships (Graham, Huang, Clark, & Helgeson, 2008).

Graham et al.'s (2008) study conflicts with the experience described with one participant. One participant, for example, reported his attempts to express feeling that he did not have the same feelings for her anymore. He expressed his struggle to communicate. Thus, while it may be important to be able to identify and express negative emotions, the efficacy of these actions rely on one's ability to do it effectively.

Earlier literature outlined various couple types as defined by Gottman (Fulwiler, 2014). Both participants can be characterized as "conflict avoiders" as demonstrated by their struggle to avoid expressing what they need from their partners (Fulwiler, 2014). For example, "John" disclosed feeling he could not fully express himself during the relationship because of his fear of hurting her, as well as feeling he needed to prove that he felt only positive feelings toward her. In addition, "Ben" similarly avoided conflict by not expressing his desire for his partner to be more integrated with his social support and network, which he felt led to feeling less detached from both her and his friends. In both situations, however, participants similarly congratulated their relationship being happy overall due to the lack of conflict that occurred in their relationships. This dynamic, however, may have contributed to the increased confusion, feelings unfulfillment and emptiness as the relationship progressed.

Culture. Cultural context informs the participant's upbringing and social patterns that influence the ability to be transparent about their feelings. Brody and Hall (2008) proposed that there are gender-related emotional display rules in most cultures. In Western cultures, boys are expected to show less of the "tender" emotions (i.e., sadness and fear) but are allowed to express more externalizing emotions such as anger and disgust. Friedman and Miller (1991) found that that men tend to be less expressive than women with the exception of expressing anger.

The extant literature supports the experience described by the participants of falling out of romantic love. The most important part of emotional experience appears to be the awareness of emotions and ability to express them. Because these emotions were not something that could be explained, participants shared feeling the heaviness of feeling empty.

"Running on Empty"

Falling out of romantic love left the participants struggling with their feelings. This process lasted for a long time. Uncertainty evolved over time into a deep, unexplainable sense of emptiness, disdain, or both. Whether it was "the last straw" or admitting to their feelings, participants remembered the moment when they knew there was no doubt about wanting to end the relationship.

Examining the findings of this study in the context of the extant literature, many relevant aspects of a man's experience of falling out of romantic love have surfaced. As young, unmarried, heterosexual men who were born and raised in Hawai'i, participants in this study grew and developed within the social and generational context of shifting gender roles, and a specific ethnically cultural population. Both participants shared similar and varying influences on their perceptions and expectations of romantic love by describing differing beliefs, values, and ways they choose to behave. Participants of the study navigated through their experiences of romantic love in the home and media, as well as their relationships with previous romantic partners throughout their life.

The core theme that emerged from these narratives describes the emptiness felt as they were falling out of romantic love. Such an experience is paradoxical in that although they describe their experience as feeling empty, the emptiness was so overwhelming that it felt heavy.

It is interesting in that the felt sense of emptiness would weigh them down when emptiness is described as nonexistent and should thus weigh nothing at all.

Pattern of Falling In and Out of Romantic Love

Romantic love does not have a singular definition, nor is its nature static. Its definition differs across cultures and may even change over the course of a person's life. Regardless, each relationship serves as a lesson for the next relationship. Participants in this study noted that each relationship and break up taught them something about how to create more lasting relationships when the right person came along. What was considered a "failed" relationship, forced both participants to look at the deepest parts of themselves and identify their inner weaknesses. Whether it was unconscious or not, falling out of romantic love helped them to find the strength in themselves to move forward in hopes of much better things in their life. Each relationship became the basis for reflecting on their potential for greater fulfillment in the next relationship.

Clinical Implications of the Study

Men and boy's lifespan development is a relatively new focus of research. Studies of men and boys' experiences of love are even more rare. Because a lot of the extant literature on the phenomenological experience of love focuses on the experiences of women and those who are or have been married, this study served as a starting point for future studies that strive to gain a better understanding of men's (including those who are single and never been married) values, perceptions, and experiences of falling in and out of romantic love.

While this study's findings are not intended to represent the experiences of all men, the study was designed to begin the process of unpacking aspects of the experience that may inform future development of grounded theories and research studies on the emotion processes of men in the context of intimate relationships. Men may receive treatment more effectively if clinicians

become aware of the differences in the way men process emotions. This growing knowledge

could benefit clinicians who are working with men, wives, girlfriends, sisters, peers, as well as

couples and families especially around issues of love. This study's findings suggest that we

should not shy away from the emotional experiences of men; instead, we should strive to

examine their similar or different needs for support than women.

This study also suggests the importance of considering how the culture of courtship and

romance have been affected by modern technology. Frequent technological advances have

changed the culture of how people socially connect and interact with one another. Greater

knowledge of the effects of social media on social and romantic interactions may assist clinicians

in their work with individuals and couples.

This study's findings also suggest the importance of exploring the high variability of

social and cultural norms relevant to romantic love. In a community as diverse as Hawaiʻi,

clinicians must consider how the cultures that emerge from the union of partners can be complex

and continually transforming.

The findings of this study further suggest the importance of considering how socialization

conditions people's experiences of love and their comfortability in processing their emotional

experiences. Stigma with respect to the expression of emotions can impact the experience of

intimate relationships for men and women, as well as their facility in processing the more

ephemeral and intangible aspects of love.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study is its use of a small purposive sample. While statistical

generalizability is not the intent of a qualitative study, capturing the complexity of social

phenomena requires replication of studies with theoretical and purposive samples that

increasingly capture the variability of human experiences with respect to a particular social phenomenon. Replication of this study with participants from diverse racial and ethnic populations, socioeconomic statuses, geographical areas, and sexual orientations would provide a deepening understanding of love from the perspective of men. Both participants in this study attended private educational institutions their entire lives, had advanced graduate degrees, and parents with college degrees. Including participants who were not born and raised in Hawai'i or from significantly different areas of Hawai'i would expand the range of experiences and increase theoretical saturation of knowledge about this phenomenon.

Another limitation of the study involved immersion. The research design and structure of including multiple in-depth interviews resulted in being restricted from having less formal contact in a more natural setting. Conducting naturalistic observation in an informal setting would have provided an opportunity to connect verbal disclosure or reports to behavioral observations of participants interacting with their current partners.

Through the study, it was questioned if one of the participants was a good fit with the purposive sampling. This is because the participant needs to be someone who has a lot of experience with the phenomenon of interest. After completing the interviews and coding process, it was still unclear if the participant had much experience in this phenomenon. This lack of experience became a limitation on being able to capture the emic experience. Further, some of the conversations about their experience was either distal conversation or intellectualizing, as well, which limited the ability to capture the emic experience.

Recommendations for Future Studies

To create a better understanding of the phenomenon of falling out of romantic love, replication of this research would provide increasing theoretical saturation, clearer

conceptualization, and more accurate and transferable thematic findings. While this study

provided several themes considered related to the experience, it by no means exhausted the list of

potential themes that may exist in the experience.

It would be interesting to look into how social decision making plays a role in

relationships and love. Both participants did not decide to break up with their partners

immediately. It may suggest that making decisions about intimate relationships is more complex

than generating a list of pros and cons. In intimate relationships, the couple begins to become an

"us" rather than a "me" and "you." This makes unilateral decisions that impact the relationship

more challenging. Future research may examine this process and what factors into a decision to

leave a relationship.

Future research might explore how the experience of falling in and out of romantic love

varies depending on the longevity of the relationships. Future research may also explore how the

experience of falling in and out of romantic love varies depending on the relationship history of

each partner.

Future research may also investigate the neuropsychology of emotions. Does the brain

process falling in and out of romantic love differently? Are experiences of romantic love

processed differently depending on an individual's developmental or learning process or

context? Can these pathways be transformed?

Further, it may be beneficial to explore the experiences and perceptions of men who

report falling in love, but have not yet experienced falling out of love. Cross-sectional studies

might examine the experiences of men at different stages of the process to see how their

experiences of love change over time. The participants in this study suggested that their initial

experiences of love were different than their experiences after the relationship had become more

established. These experiences, in turn, varied from those characterizing the dissolution of these relationships.

Current research literature reveals differences of relationship dynamics between hetero-, bi-, and homosexual couples. Because this study focused on heterosexual males, future research targeting and focusing on the LGBTQIA community may shed some light on the complexity of this phenomenon for men with different sexual orientations.

Conclusion

This research study used a transcendental phenomenological method to explore the lived experience of falling out of romantic love for two heterosexual men, born and raised in Hawai'i, who had never been married before. The study focused on their experiences of falling in and out of romantic love with a significant other, and the meanings they constructed around these experiences. The themes that emerged from their included the following: connection and bonding, something felt wrong, and the heaviness of emptiness.

Limited research has been conducted to explore the lived experience of falling out of romantic love. I am hopeful that the findings of this study will assist clinicians, mental health providers, and psychologists to become more curious about the themes and struggles men experience when falling out of romantic love.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
IRB Letter of Certification
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

ARGOSY UNIVERSITY.

January 19, 2018

Cherie Okada

Dear Ms. Okada,

Your application, "Falling Out of Romantic Love," is fully certified by the Institutional Review Board as of 1-19-2018.

You need to abide by the requirements in any letters of permission you have obtained.

Please note that research must be conducted according to this application that was certified by the IRB. Your proposal should have been revised to be consistent with your application. Please note that you also need to abide by any requirements specified in your letter of permission. Any changes you make to your study need to be reported to and certified by the IRB.

Any adverse events or reactions need to be reported to the IRB immediately.

Your full application is certified for one year from 1-19-2018. Please be aware that if your study is not likely to be completed one year from 1-19-2018, you will need to file a **Continuing Review for IRB or Continuing Certification of Compliance** form with the IRB at least two months before that date to obtain recertification. If your proposal is not recertified within the year specified (365 days), your IRB certification expires and you must immediately cease data collection.
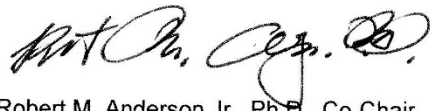
When you have completed your research you will also need to inform the IRB of this in writing and complete the required forms. You may use the **Project Completion Report** form for this purpose. Records must be retained for at least three years.

Good Luck with your research!

Please be careful not to lose this letter.

If you have questions please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Anderson Jr., Ph.D., Co-Chair
Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Joy Tanji

Appendix B
IRB Letter of Certification
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

Chaminade University

Institutional Review Board.
Chair: Helen Turner, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair: Claire Wright, Ph.D.
irb@chaminade.edu

June 9th 2019

Protocol Number: CUH 100 2019

Protocol Title: Falling Out of Romantic Love
Type of Review: Full

Dear Ms Okada

The CUH IRB IRB00007927 **APPROVED** the above referenced research.

The Board was able to determine under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) that the research does constitute human subjects research.

The Board was able to determine under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) that the research did not meet the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for exemption

The Board therefore completed a Full review process and voted on the proposal at its meeting of May 31st 2019. The approval is contingent on one stipulation, which is that the research data and records be stored at a secure location on the Chaminade campus (e.g. faculty office). Please advise the board at irb@chaminade.edu of the steps taken to meet this stipulation.

Date of IRB Approval: June 9th 2019
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: June 9th 2020

Annual or final report due: June 9th 2020

You are advised to submit requests for renewal comprising the annual report Form IV at least 30 days prior to the expiration date of your study.

Determination Category: Human Subjects Research

Type of review: Full

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

Future approval will be valid for **one year** from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A Continuing Review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all

records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Please feel free to contact the IRB with any questions or concerns.

Kind Regards,

Helen Turner, PhD
Chair, Chaminade IRB Committee

cc. Dr. Joy Tanji

Appendix C
Script for Working with Gatekeepers
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

Contacting a Gatekeeper

RESEARCHER: "Hi _____. My name is Cherie Okada. I'm a Clinical Psychology doctoral candidate at the Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I am hoping you might be able to help me find a willing participant for a qualitative research study I am conducting in partial fulfillment of my doctoral program requirements. The topic of the study is Falling Out of Romantic Love. I want to explore the experience of an individual who has previously been in a relationship, was romantically in love, and then fell out of love. Are you willing to help me find potential participants?

GATEKEEPER: *(Verbal understanding and approval of gatekeeper.)*

RESEARCHER: "Great. Thanks again for your assistance. Before you contact any potential participants, I want to express the importance of their privacy and the confidentiality of their identity as potential participants in this study. If you agree to assist me in recruiting participants for my study, please be aware that your role would only entail passing along a letter to potential participants about my study and contact information if they are interested in learning more about it. Subsequent to that, I would not be able to confirm or deny the participation of anyone you may have provided with this information. Can you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the potential participant's identity in connection with this qualitative research study?

GATEKEEPER: *(Verbal understanding and approval of gatekeeper.)*

RESEARCHER: "Okay, thank you very much. I will provide a brief overview of the study and contact information (see Appendix D). Although I appreciate your help with my study, in the interest of anonymity, it is best to avoid inquire who participates as I will not disclose who ultimately partakes in the study. I hope you can understand this importance?"

GATEKEEPER: *(Verbal understanding and approval of gatekeeper.)*

RESEARCHER: "I really appreciate your assistance in this matter. Please contact me on my cell phone if you find a potential participant. My phone number is 808-722-3477."

Appendix D
Invitation to Participate in the Study
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

Aloha,

My name is Cherie Okada, M.A., and I am a Clinical Psychology doctoral candidate at the Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu. I am in the process of conducting a Clinical Research Project in partial fulfillment of my graduation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology. Through this study I hope to gain more understanding of what it means to fall out of romantic love with a significant other in hopes of better supporting people through such experiences. I consider this project and topic very important. I also believe that all people, regardless of life position or experience, have value and can be of value to others so deeply welcome your interest in my study.

I would like to invite you to participate in up to four interviews (in addition to one meeting) that explore your experience with falling out love and what that has meant for you in your life. I would personally like to extend an invitation to you to participate in my project as I believe you possess valuable insight into the core of what I am trying to understand. The scope of your life experiences represents the knowledge and understanding that not only are a part of who you are, but will hopefully provide insight or give others (who may have had similar experiences) a better understanding of their own experiences.

If you are interested in participating in this study or would like more information, please contact me at ███████████.

With sincere gratitude,

Cherie Okada, M.A.
Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

Appendix E
Participant Information File Form
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

PARTICIPANT'S NAME	
ADDRESS	
PHONE NUMBER	
EMAIL ADDRESS	
PSEUDONYM (A PSEUDONYM WILL BE USED IN REPLACEMENT TO YOUR NAME TO PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS)	
PLEASE INDICATE YOUR PREFERRED METHOD OF CONTACT WITH THE RESEARCHER, CHERIE OKADA, M.A.	**PHONE** **E-MAIL**

Page **1** of **1**

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix F
Initial Consent for Participation in Research
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

This study is being conducted by Cherie Okada, M.A., who is a student in the Doctoral Clinical Psychology department at Chaminade University of Honolulu. She is working on a Clinical Research Project in partial fulfillment of the requirements of her program. The study's findings will not be used for decision-making by any organization. This study is for research purposes only.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research is to examine and discover the experience of falling out of romantic love from the perspective of unmarried American males, who were born and raised in Hawai'i, using a transcendental phenomenological design. The result will be a discussion of themes and patterns that emerge from our focused conversations on falling in and out of romantic love. At this stage in research, romantic love will be provisionally defined as having a deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual recognition and regard for the value of another person and relationship which may generate many powerful feelings (Grayson, 2001). The study will revolve around having experienced romantic love and then falling out of such a phenomenon with a significant other. The overall objective of this study is to help me understand more about your experiences with falling out of love with a past significant other and what that has meant to you in terms of your own personal experience of being in love.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the purpose of this study.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

How was I chosen?
This study focuses on the experiences of male adults, 18 years or older, born and raised in Hawai'i, who have experienced falling in and out of love with a significant other. For this study, *being in love* is provisionally defined as having a deep emotional, sexual, and spiritual recognition and regard for the value of another person and relationship which may generate many powerful feelings (Grayson, 2001). While there is growing literature on the biopsychosocial aspects of love and intimacy, there has been little study of the experience of falling out of romantic love from the perspective of men. Thus, this study will attempt to begin this process of exploring the lives of two men at different points in the process of falling out of romantic love and finding love again.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand why I was chosen for this study.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

What will be involved if you participate?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you participate in this research, you will be asked to meet with the researcher up to five (5) times. During the first meetings, you would be invited to meet with the researcher to discuss your experiences of falling in and out of romantic love. These meetings would last approximately one to one-and-a-half hours. With your permission, this researcher would like to tape each conversation, take notes during the interviews, and make transcriptions from the tapes in an attempt to accurately represent your perspectives in the narrative of your story that is constructed.

The last meeting would provide you with an opportunity to examine and discuss whether the researcher has captured your experiences accurately. Prior to this last meeting, the researcher will send you a copy of each of the interview transcripts and a narrative summarizing your experiences. During this last meeting, you will have an opportunity to discuss where you might want to add, remove, or adjust the write-up to make it more accurate. The notes from this meeting will then be used to ensure a better understanding of what was shared. You will again have an opportunity to review an edited draft before signing off on a final consent and release of information form.

These meetings and conversations will take place in a location that is both quiet and private, as well as centrally located for ease of travel.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand what will be involved if I participate.
Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

How long will this study take?
The research will be conducted between January 2018 and June 30, 2018. You will be asked to participate during this timeframe.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand how long this study will take.
Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Who will know what I say?
Only the researcher and her methodological consultant will have access to the password-protected transcripts/audio recordings. The methodological consultant who will serve as debriefer and peer examiner during the study will have limited access to the transcripts/audio recording in order to check the researcher's work and provide further instructional support. Throughout the study, Dr. Joy Tanji, Ms. Cherie Okada's research committee chair, will provide her with ongoing methodological support. Her role will be to provide Ms. Okada with ongoing feedback and recommendations on how to hear and capture your story with as much accuracy and robustness as possible.

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Audiotapes of conversations will be transcribed and audited by the researcher for accuracy. Currently, the researcher plans to transcribe all of the audio recordings in order to uphold the same level of ethical rigor in the handling of documents throughout the study. In the event this researcher is not able to be the transcriptionist, another trained transcriptionist or an outside 3rd party transcription service will be used. If this service is chosen, steps to ensure confidentiality and security of the data will be taken to maintain these ethical standards. This includes removing personal and identifying information from the audio recordings (i.e., names, places, and dates). Additionally, if a transcriptionist is used, you will be made aware of what service is being used and the efforts they use to maintain confidentiality. If, for whatever reason, you do not feel comfortable with the transcriptionist or transcription service I have selected (i.e., there is a conflict of interest where confidentiality is concerned), I will then locate another transcription service and ask for your consent again. I also will be personally auditing or checking the accuracy of the transcriptions against the audio recordings.

Throughout the study, you will have the right to speak off the record (anything discussed off the record will not be transcribed directly into the transcribed narrative). If you wish to speak off the record, I will turn off the audio recording device and I will stop taking notes. The recording device will only be turned back on when you give the okay. To ensure the security of the information you share during the study, all recordings, notes, transcripts, and transcript analyses will be stored on a password protected hard drive and will be discarded after completion of Clinical Research Project requirements, no later than June 30, 2020.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand who will have access to my information including the researcher's CRP Committee chair, peer debriefer, peer examiner and potentially another transcriber or outside 3rd party transcription service (for which I have received, read and understand it is Terms of Services for)..*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

What if you change your mind about participating?
You can withdraw at any time during the study. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn. Your decision about whether to participate or to discontinue participation will not jeopardize your future relations with Chaminade University of Honolulu. You can do so without fear of penalty or negative consequences of any kind.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand my right to withdraw from this study.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

How will your information be treated?
The information you provide for this research will be treated confidentially, and all data (written and recorded) will be stored securely. Written documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet,

accessible only by me, in my home. Recorded data and transcribed data will be stored on my personal password protected laptop, which is accessible only to me, then transferred to the locked cabinet after the research is completed.

All information obtained will be held with the strictest confidentiality. You will be asked to refrain from placing your name or any other identifying information on any research form or protocol to further ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times. All recorded information will be stored securely for three years, as per Chaminade University of Honolulu requirements. At the end of the three years, all recorded data and other information will be deleted, and all written data will be shredded.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand how my information will be treated.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

What are the benefits in this study?

Sometimes people find participating in focused conversation about critical life experiences to be beneficial insofar as it gives them a chance to talk about things that matter to them. It is hoped that the same will be true for the participants. This researcher also hopes that his participation will help him gain a better understanding of his own life story, perhaps some greater clarity about what has helped within his healing process and what may have challenged this process. It is also this researcher's sincere hope that his participation in this study, and the subsequent data gathered, will encourage and empower other individuals who have experienced falling out of love with their partner, or for those whose partners fell out love with them.

There will be no direct or immediate personal benefits from your participation in this research, except for your contribution to the study. For the professional community, though, your courage and generosity will provide therapists with a rare glimpse into the hidden nature of this experience for unmarried men, contributing to a more sensitive approach to these individuals in individual and couples therapy.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand what the benefits of this study are.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

What potential risks may be associated with participation?

The researcher will assure the participant that she will work closely with you throughout the process to minimize any major risks. This process privileges you in terms of direction and pace. Nevertheless, talking about personal experiences may sometimes bring up unexpected memories and insights that could be disturbing. The remembrance and experience of intense feelings associated with traumatic experiences may be painful and possibly unresolved.

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Should this happen, the researcher would stop the interview, turn off the recorder, and take time off the record to better understand what is coming up for you. If you desire, the researcher would then support you in deciding what is the most helpful way to address these concerns. This may include ending the interview for the day and reconvening at a later date, allowing you to process what came up, and/or engage in self-care. Should you want to speak off the record to process what comes out, you will be reminded that you have the right to discuss anything off the record. This means the information would not be included as part of the study unless you choose to share it again at a later date when the recorder is on. You may also at any time decide to withdraw from the study without having to provide a reason or encounter negative consequences from the researcher or Chaminade University of Honolulu.

You will also be encouraged to contact your mental health provider if you currently have one. If you do not have a mental health provider, this researcher will make recommendations for providers that may be a good fit. Additionally, the researcher will give you a Community Resource List that will include additional resources for support in caring for your mental and emotional well-being. Efforts to ensure your welfare, above all else, is most important to this researcher.

Following the conclusion of the interview in which circumstances described above occur, this researcher will contact her research committee members to consult and explain what happened. A follow-up call later that day would be made to you from the researcher directly, and then over the course of the following few days to check in with you for the participant's safety and well-being. If he experiences severe emotional distress at all during the study, even if unrelated to the interview content, this researcher would pause the interview(s) and resume only when the participant feels that he has recovered sufficiently enough to make an informed decision about continuing his participation.

Confidentiality and anonymity will both be protected throughout the length of the study. If you request that one or more of the interviews be conducted via Skype or FaceTime, please be aware that confidentiality and privacy may be compromised since video chats may not be as secure as face-to-face interviews. Although this is highly unlikely, it is possible for computer hackers to listen in on a Skype or FaceTime interview. During video chats, I will let you know when I have turned the audio recording device on and off.

In addition, because participants demographic information are disclosed to provide thick and rich data, there is the possible risk that someone who reads the study may be able to figure out who the participants are, despite best efforts taken to protect the participant's identity. To minimize this risk, the participant's real name will not appear on any transcripts or in the write-up.

Further, when not in use, audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked box, in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher will have the keys. The peer debriefer, peer examiner, and research committee members will have only limited access to these materials when performing their duties. Members of this research support team (committee members, debriefer, and peer examiner)

will have limited access to the password-protected transcripts/audio recordings in order to check my work and provide further support. The role of the debriefer is to help the investigator tell the participant's story with as much accuracy as possible. The role of the peer examiner is to check the investigator's analyses of the conversations. The role of the committee chair and member is to oversee this process and provide me with further instructional support. Throughout the study, the committee chair, Dr. Joy Tanji, will serve as my research consultant, providing ongoing methodological support, debriefing, and peer examination. In journal entries and discussions with the peer debriefer and peer examiner, participants will not be referred to with their real name. Instead, a pseudonym of the participant's choice will be used. This will be the name used in all transcriptions and write-ups.

The pseudonym I would like to use is: _____

<div align="center">(This should be the same indicated on Appendix C)</div>

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand what risks may be involved if I participate in this study.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

What are my rights as a participant?

As a participant in this study you will have the right to:

- Ask any questions regarding the study at any time, and the researcher will attempt to answer them fully.
- Withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences from me and/or Chaminade University of Honolulu. Your participation is completely voluntary.
- If at any time, you would like to speak to me off the record, you may turn off the tape recorder, then turn the tape recorder back on only when you feel that you are ready to proceed. Anything you discuss while the tape recorder is turned off will not be included as part of the study unless you choose to share this information later while the conversation is being recorded.
- Take breaks as needed during the interview.
- Pass on any question you do not wish to answer, and you may choose to think about a question and answer it at a later time.
- Add, remove, or change anything in the final write-up so that it best represents your experiences.
- Review the results of the research if you wish to do so. On June 30, 2020 or sooner, at the conclusion of this study, you may have a copy of the transcripts and recordings of our conversations. A copy of the results may be obtained by contacting **Cherie Okada** by email at ███████████████ or phone at ████████████.

Please verify which of the following you would like me to do at that time (please check all that apply):

_____ Please provide me with a copy of the audio recordings of our conversations.

_____ Please provide me with electronic transcripts (e.g., on an electronic storage device).

_____ Please provide me with a copy of your clinical research project.

Alternately, I can do one of the following (please check all that apply):

_____ Please destroy my audio recordings.

_____ Please destroy the transcripts of the audio recordings.

I am required by the Chaminade University of Honolulu Institutional Review Board to keep the audiotapes and transcriptions of the study for three (3) years following completion of the study. This is so that I will be able to respond to any queries by other researchers regarding the findings and approach used. On June 30, 2022 I will shred the paper documents I have that are associated with the study and erase the audio recordings of our conversations.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand my rights as a participant.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

What will be published?

Prior to the last meeting, a draft of the findings will be sent to you. During the last meeting, I, Cherie Okada, the researcher, would like to review this draft with you. At that time, you will be asked for permission to use certain quotes from our conversations to illustrate your experiences more clearly to others. You have the right to review these materials and decide which quotes you will allow me to include. You may also reword, add to, or decline my use of others. The final write-up of this study, including the materials you have reviewed and given your consent to use, will be published as part of Sullivan Family Library's collection at Chaminade University of Honolulu. The study may also be presented at a conference. Prior to any presentation of information, you will be contacted and consulted with regarding what will specifically be presented in the conference presentation. At that time you will have the opportunity to either agree or not agree to what will be presented.

> *I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand what will be published.*
>
> Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

If I want more information, who can I contact about this study?

If at any point in the course of our work together, you have questions about anything regarding this study, you may contact this researcher directly at ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ or by email at ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Chaminade University of Honolulu. Thus, if you have questions about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Helen Turner, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Chaminade University of Honolulu, at irb@chaminade.edu.

If at any time in the process, you have concerns about my study or our interactions with each other, you may contact my clinical research committee chair, Dr. Joy Tanji, with your feedback, via her direct line at 808-739-7428 or at joy.tanji@chaminade.edu.

By written notification to _____Cherie Okada_____, below, I indicate that the information presented in this document has been reviewed and explained to me to my satisfaction. This procedure does not preclude me from seeking further clarification of any items in the future. I understand the nature and intent of this study. I also understand my rights, responsibilities and what is being asked of me as a participant. I understand all of the above and provisionally agree to the terms and conditions specified. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to complete this informed consent procedure at the completion of my participation—after I have had a chance to review the materials I have been provided for this study. This will allow me to make any corrections or changes I feel necessary. I understand that I still maintain the right to revoke this consent at any time during the study. My signature below designates my consent to voluntarily participate in this research, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

By signing this form I am also affirming that I am at least 18 years of age or older and am not considered a minor.

Print Name	Participant's Signature	Date

Cherie Okada		
Print Name	Interviewer's Signature	Date

Appendix G
Final Informed Consent and Release of Information Form
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

I, _____, hereby authorize ___Cherie Okada___ to submit the following
       (participant)   (interviewer)
information, collected in the course of my participation in the study indicated above, in partial
fulfillment of her requirements for the Doctor of Psychology degree in Clinical Psychology, through
the Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu. I hereby
indicate that the initial informed consent agreement has been reviewed with me, and that I have had
the opportunity to review the transcripts of our conversations together and the narrative generated
on the basis of what I have shared about my experiences. I have had the opportunity to make the
necessary corrections, additions, and retractions to my interview transcripts and the narrative so that
they best represent my experiences and what they have meant to me.

I hereby authorize the use of these materials as part of _____Cherie Okada_____'s Clinical
                                           (interviewer)
Research Project. I also authorize the use of the highlighted quotes in the final write-up to better
capture and illustrate the perspectives they represent.

My signature, below, indicates that the nature and intent of the study, as well as my rights as a
participant, have been reviewed, again, so that I may refresh my memory of the issues reviewed in
the original informed consent procedure. I am aware that I may still withdraw from the study at any
time and withdraw the information I have shared as a participant without cause or negative
consequences from the researcher and/or Chaminade University of Honolulu. I understand the
material reviewed and agree to the conditions specified now that I am aware of what I am
specifically contributing to the study. I understand that the final write up of this study, including
the materials I have reviewed and given my consent to use, will be published as part of Sullivan
Family Library's collection at Chaminade University of Honolulu. I also am aware that the study
may be presented at a conference. Finally, by signing this form I confirm that I am 18 years of age
or older.

_____   _____   _____
    Participant's Printed Name   Participant's Signature   Date

_____Cherie Okada_____   _____   _____
    Interviewer's Printed Name   Interviewer's Signature   Date

Page **1** of **1**

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix H
Community Resource List for Oahu, Hawai'i
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

As a researcher, one of my top priorities is your welfare and the welfare of others. I encourage you to maintain communication with your own mental health provider or treatment team, and contact them should the need arise.

In the case I, _____ the participant, experience psychological distress
                          (Participant)
during this study,

_____ I currently have a mental health provider I maintain communication with, regularly
         see, and have immediate access to.
_____ I am not comfortable disclosing the identity of my current provider.
_____ I currently do not have a mental health provider, but had one previously and can
         return to that provider as needed.
_____ I am not comfortable disclosing the identity of my previous provider.
_____ I currently do not have a mental health provider.

Below, I also have compiled a list of mental health centers with multiple providers and services, as well as a 24-hour crisis line should you experience any feelings of distress, whether due to your participation in this study or not.

Mental Health Centers:
Kalihi-Palama Community
Mental Health Center
1700 Lanakila Ave.
Honolulu, HI 96817
808-832-5770

Mental Health Kokua
1221 Kapiolani Blvd.
Honolulu, HI 96814
(808) 737-2523

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

North Shore Mental Health
46-001 Kamehameha Hwy. # 213
Kaneohe, HI 96744
(808) 235-1599

Windward Community Mental Health
45-691 Keaahala Rd.
Kaneohe, HI 96744
(808) 233-3775

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center
86-260 Farrington Hwy.
Waianae, HI 96792
(808) 697-3300

Waimanalo Health Center
41-1347 Kalanianaole Hwy.
Waimanalo, HI 96795
(808) 259-6449

Crisis Line:
You may call the 24-hour Access line at (808) 832-3100 on Oahu or toll free at 1-(800) 753-6879
for support. They are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

_____

My signature, below, indicates that I understand in the event that I feel distressed, I will be
encouraged to maintain communication with my current mental health provider. In the case where
I do not have a mental health provider to reach, I acknowledge that I have received and may use the
Community Resource List provided, above.

Participant's Printed Name	Participant's Signature	Date

Cherie Okada		
Interviewer's Printed Name	Interviewer's Signature	Date

Page **2** of **2**

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix I
Emergency Contact Information
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

As a researcher, one of my top priorities is your welfare. I would like to obtain the phone number of an emergency contact person who might be reached in case of an emergency. I will only contact this individual in the event that you are sick, or unable to contact them yourself. The nature of our relationship and your participation in this study will be kept confidential.

I, _____, will allow _____Cherie Okada_____to contact
             (Participant)   (Researcher)
the named emergency contact person at the phone number provided, written below, in case of an emergency.

Emergency Contact Name: _____
                                             (First and Last)

Relationship: _____

Phone Number: (_____)_____ – _____

_____   _____   _____
Participant's Printed Name   Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Interviewer's Printed Name   Interviewer's Signature   Date

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix J
Scripts for Audio Recordings
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

I plan to use the following scripts for turning the recorder on (begin the session) and off (end the session) to give the participant clear notification each time. It is also a courtesy so that the participant can mentally prepare him or herself for the interview process to begin and end.

Turning Recorder On
RESEARCHER: "Hi _____. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Our meeting today will be about one to one-and-a-half hours long with breaks as needed. Let's go ahead and get started. Are you ready for me to begin recording our conversation today?"

PARTICIPANT: *(Verbal approval of participant.)*

RESEARCHER: "Okay, great. Just as a reminder, I want you to know that if you feel the need to speak off the record that you may do so at any time and without negative consequences. Please stop the recorder or let me know whenever you'd like to speak off the record. At that time, I will stop the recorder and only begin recording again once you are ready to do so. I will now press record and we can begin."

(Press record and begin.)

Taking Breaks
PARTICIPANT: States he/she would like to take a break

RESEARCHER: "Okay, that's not problem. I'm going to turn off the recorder now. Let me know when you're ready to resume and we can continue at that time."

Off-the-Record Discussions
PARTICIPANT: States he/she would like to speak off the record:

RESEARCHER: "Okay, that's no problem at all. I'm going to turn off the recorder now, and I want to remind you that whatever you share with me off record will not be part of the study unless you share the same information with me later on the record."

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____
(Turn off the recorder.

Attend to off record discussion, and ensure safety and wellbeing of participant. Utilize the Community Resource List should the participant be experiencing feelings of distress beyond the scope of processing through conversation with the researcher, and consider taking a break or discontinuing for the day, depending on issues that have come up.)

If the participant shares he/she is ready to begin recording again:

RESEARCHER: "Okay, so it sounds like you are ready to begin recording again?"

PARTICIPANT: *(Verbal approval of participant.)*

RESEARCHER: "I am going to press record on the recorder and we can begin again."

(Press record and begin.)

Concluding an interview for the day/Turning recorder off

RESEARCHER: "Okay _____. Thank you so much for sharing your story with me today, and for being part of my study. I think we did some wonderful work for today, and are now at the time to be finished. Are you ready for me to stop recording?"

PARTICIPANT: *(Verbal approval of participant.)*

RESEARCHER: "Ok, I'm going to stop the recorder for the day. Thank you again."

(Press stop.)

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix K
Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionist
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

In performing research, the confidentiality of the data gathered from participants must be prioritized and upheld. The information contained in the audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews conducted in this study may be sensitive in nature and need to be kept confidential. Like the principal investigator of the study, the members of the research team are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the participants and data. The limits of confidentiality apply throughout the duration of the study and after its completion.

I, _____, have accepted the responsibilities of transcribing the
          (Transcriptionist)
audio recordings for _____ Cherie Okada _____ 's Clinical Research Project. I
                              (Researcher)
understand that these recordings/transcripts contain personal and confidential information. The researcher, for _____ Cherie Okada _____, has instructed me that she will transport and deliver all audio recordings, transcripts, and project drafts for my review in password-protected data storage unit (USB flash drive) kept in a locked cabinet.

By signing below, I agree and understand that:

1. Data will include only digital audio and transcripts of recordings. No hard copies are authorized to be produced of any kind;
2. Data will be worked from an encrypted, password-protected flash drive which only I (and the researcher, Cherie Okada) will know the password;
3. Keys to the locked box will be kept by the person in possession of the data directly on the person or locked securely somewhere only he/she has access;
4. Transcripts of the audio recordings will be saved onto the password-protected USB (electronic storage unit) provided by the researcher. I will not store any data on my hard drive;
5. Data stored on a password protected USB will be transported securely in a locked box provided by the researcher to which only the researcher and I have the key;
6. When not in use, the data (e.g., password-protected USB, audio recordings) will be stored securely in the locked box provided by the researcher, and locked in a filing cabinet;
7. Passwords will be communicated by the researcher to me (the transcriptionist) in a separate e-mail or in person;
8. I am responsible for keeping the participant's identity and data confidential and secure during and after the conclusion of the study. I will not discuss the contents of the interview with anyone but the researcher, for Cherie Okada .

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

My signature, below, indicates that the information presented in this document has been reviewed and explained to me to my satisfaction. I have read the terms and conditions of confidentiality listed in this document. By signing this agreement, I agree to protect the identity of the participant(s) in the study. I also agree to keep all documents, audiotapes, and transcripts secure, and agree to protect the personal and sensitive information contained in these materials.

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Transcriptionist's Signature	Date

Cherie Okada	_____	_____
Print Name	Researcher's Signature	Date

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix L
Confidentiality Agreement for Debriefer/Peer Examiner/Auditor
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

As a researcher, one of my priorities is to uphold and protect the confidentiality of the participant in my study. The information contained in the audio recordings and transcripts of interviews conducted in this study may be sensitive in nature and personal, and must be kept confidential in order to protect the privacy of the participant. By signing this agreement, the Debriefer/Peer Examiner/Auditor acknowledges the importance of protecting the participant's confidentiality and agrees to protect the information contained in the conversations, audiotapes and transcripts, including the identity of the participant. The limits of confidentiality extend throughout the duration of the study and even after the study has been completed.

I, _____, have accepted the responsibilities of reviewing and discussing
(Debriefer/Peer Examiner/Auditor)
transcriptions and audiotapes as a part of the research support team for _Cherie Okada_'s
(Principal Investigator)
clinical research project. I understand that these tapes, transcripts, and the discussions I will have with the principal investigator will contain personal and confidential information. I understand that during the course of the study, I will be provided limited access to research materials in order to help me provide appropriate feedback and support to the principal investigator. While in my possession, I accept responsibility for keeping the password-protected documents provided by the principal investigator, _Cherie Okada_, protected and secure. When in my possession, I agree that when not in use, I will keep the audiotapes and transcripts being reviewed stored in a locked box in a locked filing cabinet to which only I have the key. I will not release these research materials to, and will not discuss their contents with, anyone other than the researcher, Cherie Okada. No copies of the transcripts or discussions will be retained by me during or after the study. I understand the importance of keeping all discussions, audio recordings, and transcripts secure and confidential.

I have read the terms and conditions of confidentiality listed in this document. By signing this agreement, I agree to protect the identity of the participant(s) in the study. I also agree to keep all documents, audiotapes, and transcripts secure, and agree to protect the personal and sensitive information contained in these materials.

_____   _____   _____
Print Name   Debriefer/Peer Examiner/Auditor Signature   Date

___Cherie Okada_____   _____   _____
Print Name   Researcher's Signature   Date

Page **1** of **1**

Participant's Initials _____ Date_____

Appendix M
Open Coding Sample
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawai'i School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

Mom and dad relationship
Family, as a whole
Intact vs. separated
Movies and cartoons
Skepticism
Oversimplification
Superficial facades
Children
Initial social interactions
Supports ideal romance
Search for perfect partner
Flooded with choices
Rarely conceptualizes or
thinks about the concept
Unsure if it exists
An ambiguous thing
Complex and complicated
Unique worldwide
Unsustainable
Unaware
Celebration kind of feel
Grateful
Fantasy and idealism
Overly controlled by elation
Nothing else matters
Completely consumed
Thrill
The chase
Something different
Mystery
Unpredictability
Chaos

Proximity vs. Long-
Distance Relationship
Fighting
Distance facilitates idealism
Endearment, warmth
Provides security of
feelings
Thoughtfulness
Gifts
Expression
Reciprocity, involuntary
Value self-identity, separate
Control of your own life
Freely be yourself
Space
Separation
Sense of freedom
Comfort
Appreciation to be himself
Very important
Determined over long
period of time
Similarities vs.
dissimilarities
Relate
Complimentary system
Guardedness
Lack of collaboration
One-sided
Constant withholding
Disconnected
Lack of reciprocity

Fights
Her needs before his
Guilt
Unpredictability
Created guilt, regret
Empathy and concern
Lack
of/disappearance/change
Ignored indifferent feelings
Apathy
Unfulfilled
Still holding onto
something precious
Mutual
I was thinking of you
Unspoken expectations for
him
Favors became chores
Confusion
Contemplation
Not completely satisfied
Difficulty managing his
own stress
Increased appreciation for
distance
Future
Differentiation from her
Increased trust in self
There's no working on it
anymore
Letting go, moving on

Appendix N
Axial Coding Sample
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

Level 3 Code	Level 2 Code	Level 1 Code
Influences: The Complexity of Love	Family & upbringing	Mom and dad relationship Family, as a whole Intact vs. separated
	Media	Movies and cartoons Skepticism Oversimplification Superficial facades Children Initial social interactions
	Technology	Supports ideal romance Search for perfect partner Flooded with choices
Love Defined	Abstract	Rarely conceptualizes or thinks about the concept Unsure if it exists An ambiguous thing Complex and complicated Unique worldwide Unsustainable Unaware
Connection: Intimate Bonding and Closeness	"Spark" – Special Connection	Celebration kind of feel Grateful Fantasy and idealism Overly controlled by elation Nothing else matters Completely consumed
	How it made him feel about himself	Thrill The chase Something different Sense of completeness Validation
	Sustaining the magic	Mystery Unpredictability Chaos Proximity vs. Long-Distance Relationship Fighting Distance facilitates idealism
	Reassurance	Affection Endearment, warmth

		Provides security of feelings
		Thoughtfulness
		Gifts
		Expression
		Reciprocity, involuntary
	Importance of being himself	Value self-identity, separate
		Control of your own life
		Freely be yourself
		Space
		Separation
		Sense of freedom
		Comfort
		Appreciation to be himself
	Compatibility	Very important
		Determined over long period of time
		Similarities vs. dissimilarities
		Relate
		Complimentary system
"Something Felt Wrong"	The signs	Guardedness
		Lack of collaboration
		One-sided
		Constant withholding
		Disconnected
		Lack of reciprocity
		Fights
		Her needs before his
		Guilt
		Unpredictability
	Inner desire	Created guilt, regret
		Empathy and concern
	Emotional disconnect	Lack of/disappearance/change
		Ignored indifferent feelings
		Apathy
When Emptiness Feels Heavy	Effort	Unfulfilled
		Still holding onto something precious
		Unspoken expectations for him
		Favors became chores
		Confusion
		Contemplation
	Emmeshed lives	Not completely satisfied
		Difficulty managing his own stress
		Increased appreciation for distance
		Future
Realization	Individuation	Differentiation from her
		Increased trust in self
		Self-worth & compassion
	Overwhelmed by emptiness	There's no working on it anymore
		Letting go, moving on

Appendix O
Integrated Coding List
Falling Out of Romantic Love
Clinical Research Project
Hawaiʻi School of Professional Psychology at Chaminade University of Honolulu

	"John"	**"Ben"**
Codes	Influences: Complexities of Love	Influences: Complexities of Love
	Love: "Losing Rationality of How to Be"	Love: "Rarely Thought About"
	Connection: Intimate Bonding and Closeness	Connection: Intimate Bonding and Closeness
	"Something Felt Wrong"	"I don't know if I'm feeling this"
	A Sudden Realization: "In a heartbeat"	Realization: "At that point"
Core Code	Something Felt Wrong	Something Missing
Integrated Core Code	Running on Empty	