

Pagtanda at Matanda Na:  
Metro Manila Home for the Aged Residents  
Narratives on the Meanings of *Aging*

Kate Ashlyn N. Dayag-Nonay  
*University of the Philippines Diliman*

ABSTRACT

All people age, but not everyone is mindful of what it means to age. Meanings of aging vary based on individual experiences, which include changes in mental, physical, environmental, relational, and even the sense of identity. This exploratory study described and analyzed how 11 *lolos* and *lolas* from four (4) private homes for the aged within Metro Manila constructed the meaning of aging. Using the Symbolic Interactionism perspective, this research identified and explained the role of identity and interaction in the participants' understanding of aging. The participants reminisced about significant life moments through storytelling before they engaged in conversations about their identities and relationships with people around them. The study found that the definitions of aging were signposted during two stages: *Pagtanda* (before living in the home for the aged) and *Matanda Na* (living in the home for the aged). Some of the words they used to define the meaning of aging are (1) *kuntento*, (2) *positibo*, (3) *nalimitahan*, (4) *prosesong hindi maiiwasan*, (5) and (6) *pag-iba* (pagbabago). All these definitions were affected by constructs, such as marriage, health, money, interaction, and environment. In analyzing the various definitions, the repeating constructs, and the role of identity and interaction in aging, selected residents of homes for the aged within Metro Manila are arguably content but not satisfied.

Keywords: *aging, interpersonal communication, meaning-making, symbolic interactionism, home for the aged*

### Introduction

Everybody ages, but not everybody agrees on what it means to age. Individuals' definitions of aging differ based on their observations of older people in their immediate surroundings. These differences in experiences could explain their subjective worldview of aging. For some, the construction of the meaning of aging is primarily based on bodily changes. Observations such as loose skin, grey hair, and grumpy attitude result in a fear of aging.

Others, on the other hand, argue that feelings and activities, more than physical limitations, are better criteria for framing the meaning of aging. Exposure to older individuals who are competent in activities like marathons, volunteer services, and even work encourages individuals to age gracefully. No matter how different these observations are, an early understanding of what it means to age, based on other old individuals' unique experiences, gives opportunities for reflection.

Chronological age is the most accessible basis for defining aging. The United Nations (UN) defines old as someone 60 years or older (World Population Aging, 2015). Although most countries conform to UN standards, a few have different numerical definitions. For instance, African countries define senior citizens as those who are 50 to 55 years old—relatively “younger” than the UN standard (World Population Aging, 2015). Differences in definition among countries are linked to variations in the population age range (Lockenhoff et al., 2009), perceptions of an old person's physical and mental abilities (Jacobs, 2013), and the computed life expectancy of each country (Sanderson & Sherbov, 2008).

Others would also define aging based on their physical activities and social contributions. Aging may mean abandoning their active lifestyle, work patterns, and relationships with people they frequently interact with (Cruz & Camhol, 2014). Retiring from the usual daily activities after getting used to them for decades makes an older adult feel incapacitated. Aging also becomes more evident as they lose their family members and friends (Cruz & Camhol, 2014). Retirement, declining physical capabilities, and losing important family members make them feel “unuseful” to others. These manifestations of reduced functionality lead to their dependence on other people (Little & McGivern, 2013).

The role of culture and society is also important in understanding how older adults construct the meaning of aging (Faller & Marcon, 2013). For example, the Chinese believe in the importance of work to keep older adults active and to help them live autonomously (Faller & Marcon, 2013). They also think filial piety or respect for parents, grandparents, and ancestors defines their values (Hamilton, 1990, as mentioned in Little & McGivern, 2013). In Lebanon, the aging experience is associated with religious beliefs and spiritual ties, while the

French refer to aging as the freedom to introspect. Paraguayans and Brazilians view aging negatively, linking it to chronic diseases, physical limitations, financial dependence, and loss of autonomy as influenced by shared experiences (Faller & Marcon, 2013).

### Aging in the Philippines

The Philippines has experienced an increasing number of aging individuals through the years. In the 1980s, 4.1% of the country's population were senior citizens (de Tavera, 1989). By 2000, their population increased to 4.6 million, or approximately 6% of the country's population. A decade later, in 2010, the elderly population increased to 6.9%. At this rate, the National Statistics Office (NSO) estimates that the elderly population will skyrocket to 11% in 2030 and could rise between 10% and 19% by 2050 (Philippine Statistics Office, 2005).

The Philippines, just like the rest of the world, is a “graying society.” It places older adults in higher status in the family and the workplace, where their wisdom and authority are respected (Barnhart, 2013; de Tavera, 1989). In 2010, the Philippine Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010, also known as Republic Act No. 9994, was enacted. This legislation established Senior Citizens Centers in all cities and municipalities across the country, providing recreational spaces, access to a 20% discount from establishments, and waiving admission fees for training and seminars aimed at personal development, among others (R.A. No. 9994, n.d.).

With this and other care systems in place, a majority of older adults remain satisfied with their aging experience despite poor health conditions, uncompetitive health policy, and abundant stress factors in the Philippines (Cruz & Camhol, 2014). Filipino older adults define successful aging in terms of “functional health, active engagement with life, the absence of pain and debilitating conditions, and maintenance of vision and hearing” (Philippine Study of Aging, 2007, para. 2). Older adults report a decreasing index of successful aging as they grow older, especially those living in poorer households (Mallari, n.d.). However, despite this decline, they still report a general sense of satisfaction with their aging experience (Mallari, n.d.).

The Filipino value of respecting the oldest person's leadership in the household could be one of the factors that keep senior citizens physically and emotionally successful agers. In many Filipino families, adult children are financial providers to older adults as they age (Glasser, as cited in Valdez, Angeles, Pereja-Corpuz, & Hernandez, 2013). Filial piety is evident in the close emotional connection expressed by younger generations when communicating with their elders (Del Villar, 2015), such as using the words *po* and *opo* as a sign of respect or gestures such as *pagmamano*, where the back of an elder's hand is placed on a younger person's forehead to ask for blessings. Moreover, only 5.38% of Filipino

senior citizens live alone in the Philippines (Ageing Asia, 2020) because most families extend their household to their elderly (De Guzman, 1999). Most Filipino family members also feel guilty when they cannot care for and accommodate their elders at home (Medina, 2015) because caregiving is considered a family responsibility. Yet, despite being culturally imperative to take care of them at home, around 14 thousand older adults still reside in institutional living quarters, such as dormitories, nursing homes, convents, and penal institutions (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017). Many of them were surrendered by neighbors or found dwelling in the streets (Erah, 2015).

With these shifts in age, power, and location, it is relevant to ask: How do older adults make sense of their experiences and interactions as they age? How do they construct the meaning of what it is to age in a changed and changing environment?

### Aging Challenges in the Modern World

Cogwill and Holmes (1972) argue that the decline in the status of the elderly in society involves “modern health technology, economic technology, urbanization, and increased education” (as mentioned in Ju & Jones, 1989, p. 39). Many psychologists have also been critical of the market’s introduction of age-lock or anti-aging products because of its “avoidance” of an image of “aesthetic displeasure” (Phillipson & Biggs, 1998). Bringing consumerism to an aging body creates a distorted experience between the sense of self and societal aging expectations (Rapoleini & Lithuana, 2015; Phillipson & Biggs, 1998). Arguably, maintaining beauty among women is deemed necessary in certain contexts, such as migration, where physical appearance contributes to social acceptance (Ong & Braun, 2016). The better they look, the better they feel about themselves, thus assigning positive meanings to their aging experience. Older adults maintain their physical appearance not only to feel good and look young but also to be socially accepted.

Older adults also face the challenge of living alone because their children work far from home or migrate with their families. There is also less urgency for children to live with their parents because of improved access to transportation and communication, weakening intergenerational immediacy and dependence. Placing older adults in homes for the aged or leaving them in isolation is considered a last resort for those who are destitute, have no relatives who have been cut off from them, or suffer from disabilities that place a burden on their families (Adi, 1982). However, society is now becoming more accepting of nursing homes. In Malaysia, elderly people in nursing homes have consented to relocate because of societal changes, modern family lifestyles and mindsets, poor health, and the changing family structure (Hoe, Kamarulzaman, & Heang, 2018). Similarly,

Chinese elderly individuals rely on strong intergenerational family support before relocating (Wang et al., 2022). They also cited that difficulties in taking care of themselves or proximity to nursing homes lead them to move than live as empty nesters (Wang et al., 2022). On the contrary, elders with a high educational level and high income are more likely to refuse to be placed in home care facilities (Wang et al., 2022). Despite personal tensions between conventional values and modern mindsets, older adults from highly collectivist countries are increasingly open to relocating from family houses.

Elderly experiences of transitions (Avendano, 2003), acclimatization (de Guzman, 2012), adaptation (Sun, 2021), quality of life (Singh et al., 2024), and experiences (Francisco, et al., 2023; Chee, 2022; Shivarudraiah, Ammapattian, Antony, & Thangaraju, 2021; Rahayu, S., Daulima, & Putri, 2018.) in nursing homes have been widely studied across cultures, primarily through qualitative research. In transitioning to homes for the elderly, de Guzman et al. (2012a) proposed the hourglass model of acclimatization, where the older adults undergo a process of *conversion* and *immersion* before fully embracing a sense of “home” in a nursing care facility in the Philippines. Resistance is instinctive among the elderly during their first few days in the homes for the aged before eliminating the feeling of abandonment and eventually succeeding in coping and integrating into the home for the aged (de Guzman et al., 2012b).

Narratives from both Filipino and foreign nursing home residents acknowledge the importance of emotional support (Rahayu, Daulima, & Putri, 2018) and social support (Rodriguez-Martinez et al., 2024) from family members, albeit remote. They also highlight the importance of social engagement in overcoming social isolation, which is most apparent during transition periods (de Guzman et al., 2012c). Moreover, having a “good life” (Minney & Ranzijn, 2015) meant having access to service providers who help enhance their physical, social, and psychological well-being (Shivarudraiah, Ammapattian, Antony, & Thangaraju, 2021). Although studies show that initial resistance to moving into nursing homes eventually leads to acceptance and that living in-home care facilities is better than living alone, especially for those who are physically frail but cognitively intact (Minney & Ranzijn, 2015), older adults who live with family members report greater happiness and a better quality of life compared to those living in homes for the aged (Singh et al., 2024).

These modern challenges in identity and changing living environment setups are also expected to influence how older adult participants perceive themselves and how they respond to society. Aside from the shifts in identity roles (friend, spouse, parents, grandparents), residents of homes for the aged also experience a transition from a household set-up to a created and manufactured living space.

## The PCS Review 2024

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Most of the studies reviewed employed qualitative interviews or focus group discussions, with only a few using regression analysis. This study adopted a qualitative approach similar to the approach used in most of the reviewed literature to look for meaningful constructs. However, instead of in-depth or semi-structured interviews, the study used *pakikipagkwentuhan* to maintain a more informal approach to data collection. The same approach was used by Avendano (2003) in her dissertation about the life transitions of the elderly, which also required participants to recall their past experiences.

A gap in the reviewed literature showed that aging studies remain atheoretical and scattered in various fields (Johfre & Saperstein, 2023), such as nursing, psychology, and social work. This study used symbolic interactionism as a framework to highlight the communicative aspect of meaning-making. Furthermore, while most studies about the elderly discuss aging through experiences and quality of life during their stay at home for the aged, this research looks beyond their experiences in homes for the aged by exploring significant turning points in their lives through the process of reminiscing.

This research highlights the role of interpersonal relationships and communication, specifically the interplay between identity and communicative interactions, as both precedence and outcomes in creating what it means to age. While most studies on aging and its meaning focus on sociocultural approaches to understanding their environment, this research focuses on interactions and symbols to understand how Filipino older adults make sense of their social worlds. It answers the question, how do Filipino older adults construct the meaning of aging?

### Method and Sampling

After a thorough online search of homes for the aged, a final list of 20 private and public institutions in Metro Manila was compiled. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were sent to each institution; however, only 4 of 20 granted consent. The consent of the owners or administrators of these homes was crucial as they serve as gatekeepers and guardians of the older adults, who are among the society's vulnerable groups. Courtesy meetings were held with the administrators to discuss the study's objectives and timeline and set important reminders for conducting the research. I requested their assistance in identifying residents who would meet the study criteria: (1) 60 years of age or older and (2) were in optimal physical and mental condition to participate in *pakikipagkwentuhan*.

## The PCS Review 2024

The data gathered cannot be generalized to all older adults in homes for the elderly, especially those excluded from the study, such as older individuals in the late stages of dementia and those who are socially unavailable for conversations.

The identified older adults were approached to seek their approval to participate in the study. Each was asked to complete an informed consent form citing the project’s overview, participant and researcher responsibilities, risks and benefits, and data usage. All participants gave either written or verbal consent (limited to those with hand tremors). Moreover, the administrators also requested that the participants’ identities and the homes for the aged be kept anonymous.

The final group of participants comprised six males and five females aged 60 to 76 years. Some exhibited early signs of dementia, while others had pre-existing health concerns, such as arthritis, cataracts, or blindness. Aside from criterion sampling, the study used Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) *theoretical saturation*, wherein “sampling continues until each category of investigation is saturated (or no new or relevant data is emerging from a particular category)” (Ross, 2002). The extensive and lavish series of *kwento* of the eleven participants facilitated the identification of common themes and met the criteria for data analysis.

Table 1. *Summary of the Definitions and Constructs of Aging*

| Male Participant ( <i>Lolos</i> ) |     | Female Participant ( <i>Lolas</i> ) |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Name                              | Age | Name                                | Age |
| Tatay Vicente                     | 75  | Lola Carmen                         | -   |
| Lolo Ignacio                      | 76  | Mommy Ruby                          | -   |
| Dad Frank                         | 76  | Nanay Theresa                       | 60  |
| Lolo Kiko                         | 66  | Nanay Pacita                        | -   |
| Lolo Raynaldo                     | 66  | Sister Carmen                       | 74  |
| Lolo Jun                          | 66  |                                     |     |

This qualitative research used *pakikipagkwentuhan* and reminiscence to gain insights about the meaning construction of aging. Reminiscing, or life reviewing, is one of the behaviors commonly associated with aging individuals (Cohen & Taylor, 1998). Although it has been discouraged due to potential negative emotional triggers, research supports its significance in the aging process (Butler, 1963; Greene, 1994) because it helps individuals accept negative life events, resolve past conflicts, establish connections between past and present, and ultimately discover life’s purpose (Pot et al., 2008).

Moreover, reminiscence has also been used as therapy through life story discussion in community settings and nursing homes (Erber, 2013; Greene et al.,

1994). As expected, the older adult participants willingly and lavishly recounted their life stories.

Due to the nature of *pakikipagkwentuhan* as “informal, free, as well as a social process of exchanging information, thoughts, and knowledge that is part of human daily activities” (Orteza, 1997), the flow of storytelling differed based on the *kwentos* shared by the participants. The following key points guided the flow of the conversation:

- reminiscing the past (e.g., What events are most memorable in your family growing up? In school? In work?);
- the self (e.g., if you were to base your age on how you feel, how old do you feel?);
- interactions (e.g., How do you feel living here?); and
- views on aging (e.g., What would be your advice to other people on aging?)

The data gathering was completed in six months, with conversations lasting 2 to 4 hours per session for each older adult. Follow-up visits were done to clarify the gathered data and to ensure the narratives were accurately interpreted and presented.

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis was used to analyze data by examining the “perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (King, 2004 as cited in Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017 p. 2). The succeeding section discusses how the data from each key point were analyzed using the key assumptions of symbolic interaction to answer the research objective.

### Symbolic Interactionism

The analysis of this study is grounded on Symbolic Interactionism’s assumption that meanings are formed through interactions and an individual’s concept of self. Herbert George Blumer (1969), who coined the term *symbolic interaction*, discussed how symbolic interaction creates meanings in two ways: (1) meanings can be innate in an object, and (2) meanings are “physical attachment” given by humans to an object. He insisted that meanings are not an “intrinsic feature” of the object; instead, they are produced from a series of interactions among members of a group (Tezcan, 2005). This highlights the importance of identity and significant interactions as both the precedence and outcome of older adults’ interpersonal communications within their relationships. Symbolic interactionists acknowledge the possibility of varied interpretations by different groups of people on an object, event, or concept. Meanings of facts, therefore, are



not considered constant; they can differ across interpretations and may change over time.

The older adults' narratives during the *pakikipagkwentuhan* sessions included ruminating about social interactions in various relationships and negotiating identities through discussions of self-related concepts. The Symbolic Interactionists' idea of the self was used to categorize the older adults' narratives based on the concepts of *Me* and *I*. Questions such as, "What experiences in work, school, community, family, and home for the aged are most important and impactful to you?" were asked. The participants were also asked about their aging identity by asking, "How old do they feel?" The generalized other was also identified by coding statements that conveyed their feelings towards their co-residents or older adults. Their interactions were analyzed based on their roles in various situations and through answering speculative questions such as, "How did you react to these experiences?"

The role of interaction was also identified by exploring how they communicated with different groups of people in their lives, such as co-workers, parents, children, neighbors, and co-geriatrics. The findings on the self and interactions were analyzed collectively to identify the constructs that influenced the older adult's definition of aging.

## Results and Discussion

Stories are constructions. Stories, as a product of human reminiscence, become an individual's reality despite their subjectivity. In this research, the subjectivity of human reminiscence is encouraged because an individual's self-perceived reality becomes a basis for making sense of the world. After asking a series of questions about their personal experience from childhood to adulthood, the *logos* and *lolas* were asked questions about what aging means to them.

### A. Kuntento (Contented): Aging is an experience towards contentment

For Lolo Vicente, aging gracefully required contentment with one's possessions. He was a tailor who constantly talked about his first love instead of his wife. He shared this piece of advice:

Be content with what you have. Many people would say that you should be content with your wife. So, do not look for another wife. My major drawback was seeking after another woman even though I was with my wife. I was not content (translated from Tagalog).

Lolo Vicente initially expressed his contentment in his married life but promptly retracted it after remembering his first love. He was trying to convince himself that he still has a positive outlook on life and aging despite the consequences of his relational dissatisfaction with his wife. During the *kwentuhan* sessions, he always reminded himself to be grateful by sharing stories proving his marital contentment.

Contented aging was also associated with ensuring quality education and a better life for their children. Lolo Reynaldo took pride in sending his children to schools of his choice and supporting them as they graduated with honors. As a lawyer and a former professor, he recognizes the importance of education. Furthermore, he found contentment because he could provide his children with a home. Similarly, Nanay Ruby agreed with Lolo Vicente that their gratifying relationships with their children shape the aging experience. Despite her failed first marriage, she continued to provide the best for her daughter.

Even though Filipino elderlies experience stressors such as bereavement stressors, family-related stressors, and work-related stressors” (De Jose, 2014), they still maintain a positive outlook in life. As part of their coping mechanism, they rely on strategies such as:

trying to see the positive side, praying for guidance and strength, studying the problem, talking to friends and relatives, preparing for the worst, keeping feelings to oneself, and engaging in exercise. (De Jose, 2014, p. 8)

Some of these coping mechanisms are also reflected in the succeeding discussion.

### **B. Positibo (Positive): Aging is choosing a positive disposition**

The *lolos* and *lolas* claimed that their aging experience has been positive despite career and marriage failures. Below are several factors identified as contributing to this shift in perspective.

**Accumulated Experiences.** Lolo Ignacio openly expressed frustration over how being physically unfit led to failed relationships in the past, which eventually caused despair in his succeeding relationships. Despite his continual grievances about how his life turned out, he still views his aging experience positively due to his rich life experiences.

Similarly, Lolo Frank highlighted the role of accumulated experiences in achieving maturity in thoughts and deeds, which he considered necessary for aging happily. He equated aging with maturity to earn the respect of others. One significant insight from Lolo Frank was to adjust one’s actions and interactions according to aligned behaviors expected of someone his age:

## The PCS Review 2024

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I act according to my age. I should look respectable because of my age and ability to relate to others. I don't mind if people perceive me as old. You cannot add or subtract [age]. You must be mature in thought and words (translated from Tagalog).

**Sound Mind and Better Health.** Nanay Theresa expressed pride in her intellect and character, which she believed showed no signs of aging. Contrary to Lolo Frank's notion that aging positively was synonymous with acting maturely, Nanay Theresa was happy and proud of her youthful and lively demeanor. She also considered that her playful character is not indicative of being *matanda na*:

My mind does not seem to age. I also wonder if it is because others' wits are already declining, but mine does not seem to age. Sometimes, my sibling would say, "Shouldn't you act according to your age?" I asked, "But why?" Then, they would tell me, "Because you are already old, but you are still like *that*." I was often told to act like I am not yet old because I joke a lot. I tell them, "It is my only happiness, so do not take it from me" (translated from Tagalog).

Lolo Frank, an engineer and a pastor, has kept his graduation ring and continues preaching the gospel at home for the aged. He also continues to read newspapers and books to increase his understanding of the world. He associates his optimistic perspective on aging with his unrelenting thirst for knowledge. Moreover, he was active in bodybuilding when he was younger. He also believes that his faith in God influenced his view on the importance of maintaining physical health:

If you don't exercise, your body will be sick...You need to care for your body because God gave it to you. The book I am reading now mentions that we have to be healthy and exercise because the Lord gave us our bodies. We should not neglect. We need to exercise and be fit because that is how the Lord designed our bodies (translated from Tagalog).

Rowe & Kahn (1998) defined successful aging as the "complete absence of disease, disability, and risk factors such as smoking and drinking; the maintenance of physical and cognitive functioning; and an active engagement in life" (as mentioned in Philippine Study of Aging 2007, para 1). The older adults attribute positive aging not only to their physical preparations when they were younger but also to their spirituality and cheerful disposition, which they believe contribute to better health and body.

**Spirituality/Religion.** Faith in God is also one factor that fosters a positive outlook on aging. For example, Lolo Frank’s fear of God motivates him to maintain his physical health. Similarly, Lolo Kiko’s religiosity also influences his decision to determine what he believes is best for him. Mama Mary, according to Lolo Kiko, appeared to him and advised him not to be concerned about his deteriorating relationship with his wife:

When Mama Mary appeared before me in the church, she said, “Child, do not fret. I will guide you.” I was already here when that happened. She suddenly talked to me. I believe in this (holds rosary) because it is the Blessed Virgin Mary (translated from Tagalog).

**Marriage/Non-marriage.** For the *lolos* and *lolas*, finding a compatible partner is essential to appreciate aging. Lolo Kiko advised choosing a spouse from a long-standing relationship to ensure a fulfilling marriage. He strongly opposed commitments formed from flings and sudden infatuations, as he has personally experienced with his wife. He further added:

... I enjoyed my life. I did not marry again. I do not like to marry again because it is troublesome. Marriage is a joke. If you plan to get married, choose the right man for you. Do not choose troublemakers (translated from Tagalog).

Lolo Kiko was candid about his regrets about his marriage but accepted that this was a necessary experience that allowed him to evaluate himself and ultimately move on from his wife. In their advice, the *lolos* and *lolas* underscore the importance of marriage in the aging process. Mommy Theresa also gave the same advice—do not settle into marriage haphazardly. Ironically, Sister Carmen, who never married, advised that the earlier individuals settle into marriage, the better it is for aging because it means spending more time with the spouse.

### C. Nalimitahan (Limiting): Aging is a limiting experience

Contrary to the positive definitions of aging, some *lolos* and *lolas* viewed aging as limiting the possibility of achieving something more. Some limitations include regrets about what they should or could have done. Compared to the earlier mentioned negative experiences, which still led to a positive mindset on aging (i.e., marriage), some of the older adult participants’ could-have-been and what-ifs were neither rationalized nor accepted. Instead, they felt that this had impeded them from making amends with themselves.

**Parenthood.** Some of the *lolos* and *lolas* saw parenthood as a new challenge. Like Nanay Ruby, most parents would feel positive about parenthood, especially

when they felt satisfied with how they raised their children. On the contrary, Lolo Raynaldo felt that being a parent brought him unnecessary obligations but still considers having children his most memorable life event. His mixed emotions came from having to be continuously responsible for his children: “I started to have an obligation. Sometimes I like it, sometimes I don’t. I’m not sure.”

**Asawa/ Marriage.** Marriage can be considered the most significant construct in perceiving aging negatively. Lolo Ignacio quickly pointed out that being loyal is one of the most important factors for aging well. He also attributes the decline in his health to his disloyalty to his wife. He said, “First and foremost, [you have] to be loyal to your spouse. I was not loyal to her; that is why this happened.”

Similarly, Lolo Frank spent years living apart from his wife due to a misunderstanding. Despite this, he was still thankful for how his children filled the void left by his partner’s absence.

Marriage is one. It is supposed to have a big impact on our lives. If we maintain it, it can guide us to live life better. Unfortunately, things were not good between my wife and me. I do not mind because I stayed focused on my work. My children put me here so someone can look after me. I do not want to overthink it anymore. I do not have a life-threatening illness, but at least someone takes care of me (translated from Tagalog).

**Spirituality/Religion.** Consistent with most of the literature on aging, spirituality and religion play a vital role in older adults’ favorable view of aging, better mental health, and longevity (Lima et al., 2020; Malone & Dadswell, 2018; Zimmer et al., 2016) across countries. Spirituality or religiosity aids in coping with relationship transitions as individuals age. Evidence shows that people become more involved with religion or spirituality as they age (Moberg, 2005, as cited in Zimmer et al., 2016). Most of the *lolos* and *lolas* in the home for the aged told stories about personal religiosity or spirituality. One was a pastor, while the other was a non-ordained nun. The study contributed to the extensive literature on spirituality and aging and showed narratives highlighting their inadequate religious practice. Lolo Ignacio recounted his experience:

I hope the Lord spares me. I asked the Lord to spare me and not to take me yet. I have been asking the Lord why this is happening in my dreams. It has been difficult because I cannot find a solution even if I try to think of a solution. My advice? Go to church. That is another problem; I do not go to church.

Filipinos have higher levels of religiosity and tend to contemplate the meaning of life more than other nationalities (Zimmer et al., 2016). However, it is also essential to look at how the nonpractice of spirituality throughout life affects their views on aging and decision-making. From hindsight, Lolo Ignacio felt guilty of not being more spiritual as he aged. Religion and spirituality also help older adults make sense of their experiences. Lolo Ignacio even attributed his failing health to his rare church attendance.

**Health.** Some participants were brought to the home for the aged to dissipate filial conflicts, while others came to avoid potential isolation. Yet, most of them sought care because of their relatives' inability to provide them with ample medical attention. Unsurprisingly, most of them talked about ailments and how these have limited them from achieving their dreams and establishing better relationships at specific points in their lives. For example, Lolo Ignacio recalled how he used to be a chain smoker. He associated his inability to remember the name of his child and his mistress with a stroke, which eventually led to symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. He shared, "I made wrong choices. I did not take caution. I did not take my vitamins. Now that I am old, [I take] maintenance. I was wrong for not going to blood check-ups. I consume ten packs of cigarettes every day."

Lola Carmen advises aging adults to follow doctors' food restrictions. Her current condition puts her on a strict diet, which made her consider health as a primary concept in aging gracefully.

Lolo Kiko had a more pessimistic view of aging, comparing it to having a stroke, which he described as the end of life. His pessimism over an unhealthy lifestyle while aging is grounded in the inability to care for oneself and perform daily activities.

I thought I would never grow old until my strength faded away.  
If you suffer from a stroke, that's the end of your life... That is why you have to be prepared for your aging. This means you have to have money. You have to strengthen your relationship because if something wrong happens, someone will rescue you. Someone should help you, or else you will suffer.

Lolo Kiko highlighted the importance of having a healthy body and emphasized the need to earn enough money and build relationships to deflect suffering. Based on personal experience, he considered his son, who has enough financial resources, his best investment.

**Unfulfilled Goals.** Lolo Frank recalled how his health issues limited him from pursuing his dream of becoming a business tycoon. Unfortunately, after suffering a stroke, he found himself residing in a home for the aged. Moreover,

Sister Carmen shared her lifelong ambition of becoming a nun, but she failed to complete her training despite numerous attempts. Because of this, she regretted spending her life chasing after a dream that eventually failed her. Her negative experience with aging was partly affected by her failure to reach the vocation that she had always desired.

Lolo Vicente pointed out that he prevented himself from aging gracefully, citing arrogance and selfish decision-making. He also advised that individuals should recognize opportunities and refrain from selfish acts, such as choosing only what benefits them. He also stated that he would have done much more if only he had the financial opportunity. In short, he emphasized seizing opportunities, like how he moved on with his life without grabbing better opportunities.

I could have done many things if only the circumstances had been easier for me. But sometimes, I become too self-absorbed. We cannot say it is wrong or right, but it happens to us. We only think about the opportunity when it has already passed by. How can you bring it back? I could have experienced so many things without focusing on my pride.

In exploring studies on aging and unfulfilled life ambitions, limited studies connect unfulfilled goals to aging and loneliness. Tiilikainen & Seppänen (2016) stated that unfulfillment brings aging loneliness caused by the loss or absence of a spouse, lack of meaningful friendship, complex parenthood, and troubling childhood experiences. However, no study addresses the relationship between positive or negative aging experiences, identities, and unfulfilled dreams or goals. This definition may become increasingly relevant in the current stream of aging individuals who are more career-oriented and goal-focused.

### **D. Hindi Maiiwasan (Unavoidable): Aging as an unavoidable process**

One of the neutral definitions of aging was associated with the terms *proseso* (process), constant, and *hindi maiiwasan* (unavoidable). Mommy Carmen initially admitted that she feared aging but quickly retracted it by saying, “Wala na rin,” a statement of acceptance. On one hand, Lolo Frank defined aging as the reverse of being young, describing it as inescapable because it is “given” by God. He explained aging based on what it is not — youth. This could further explain how the young-old binary was often used to describe aging. According to him, an individual is young when he does not manifest signs of aging and is not considered old when he still manifests youthfulness. More so, Lolo Frank believed that God made it easier for him to accept aging and the changes it brings.

## The PCS Review 2024

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Aging is something that you cannot avoid. It is already there, so you should accept it and do it. That is what God has given you. As a Christian, it is natural that you are not getting younger anymore...I want to face the truth that I will age.

He also commented on how individuals use anti-aging products to make themselves appear younger. While he recommended using products that promote health and well-being, he is against those who take “anti-aging medications” because they do not reverse age or make people younger.

I only use Eskinol because I feel that when I do that, I care for myself. After all, that (body) is what the Lord gave us, so we must take care of ourselves.

Lolo Frank also discussed that an individual’s character continues as they age, regardless of whether it is positive or negative. He said, “People who age carry their character with them. Their character, whether good or bad, defines a person.”

Like Lolo Frank, Lolo Ignacio perceives aging as a process. Grounded in his religious belief, he trusts that God instigated aging as a part of life. He argued, “I see aging as a process. You cannot do away with it. It is part of our lives. When you age, you must be more careful and closer to the Lord.”

Mommy Theresa had a different reason for considering aging as a natural process. She did not fear aging because she believed she had not wronged anyone or committed any significant mistake.

Mommy Theresa and Lolo Kiko believed their aging experience was also influenced by how their family members experienced aging. For example, Mommy Theresa often recounted her encounters with her grandmother, who always responded to her kindly. As an effect, she aspired to emulate her despite their characters’ differences. Unlike Daddy Jun, who saw hardships in his parents growing up, he perceives aging as tough. In Lolo Kiko’s case, longevity was not dependent on his physical condition, spirituality, or relationship but also on his family history.

[Our] clan usually has a 6-year allowance to live. When someone from the clan would reach 60, he would die sooner or later. My father died when he was 60. Everyone in the family has heart disease. He said, “When I reach 60, I’m already near my grave.”

The *lolos* and *lolas* view of aging was based on how other people before them had aged. This implies that individuals who were told about aging or who



observed people aging subconsciously adapt their emotions and behavior to a certain degree. Arguably, they still need to adjust to these encounters fully but take a certain degree of control to incorporate their personal experiences.

Shulz and Hanusa (1980) argued that well-being only decreases when there is a significant gap between the expected and actual levels of control. This premise could explain why the *lolos* and *lolas* maintain a contented life view even after adverse circumstances befell them. External forces such as family health history and the will of God force them to think that they have little to no control over aging and entrust situations to changes. The phrase *bahala na* makes them feel that death, illness, and tragedies are natural and that they have little control over them. However, internal forces, such as doing good to others, allow them to still exert some control over the natural aging process.

### F. Pagbabago (Change): Aging as change

Lastly, aging is defined as an unexpected change in what they have and what they can do. When Sister Carmen was younger, she did not think about getting old. Aging was sudden for her: “You used to have someone to play with and eat with. You tend to be busy. You used to be fearless. You were still with your parents. And then everything changed when you got older.” Although she claimed to have a religious background, she did not see aging as associated with spirituality, unlike Lolo Vicente and Lolo Raynaldo. She even questioned why people must age: “Why do we get old? I hope I do not get old because I do not like to be a burden to anyone who takes care of me. It is difficult to have your butt cleaned.” The gradual incapacity to do the things they once did easily was regarded as their first sign of aging. Another measure she suggested was her inability to do things independently and needing help from others to perform daily tasks. She also measured aging according to goals — from working on her dream to eventually giving up.

The meanings of aging differ among *lolos* and *lolas*, and they associate various words with it: *kuntento*, *positibo*, *nalimitahan*, *proseso*, and *pagbabago*. Most of these definitions are anchored on health, faith, marriage, characters, goals, and other life aspects. Their definition of aging was constructed based on their lived experiences before they resided in the homes for the aged. However, some of the answers of the *lolos* and *lolas* also account for their experiences inside the homes. These differences in narratives from the two periods in an older adult’s life led to two different paths to understanding what it means to age. Aging is further explained in two Filipino terms: *pagtanda* and *matanda na*. *Pagtanda* refers to aging from childhood, while *matanda na* refers to the aging experience when they first contemplated aging and while residing in the home for the aged.

### Constructs of Aging Ngayong Matanda Na

Money, health, interaction, and environment are recurring constructs now that they see themselves as *matanda na*. Although some of these constructs have also been identified as necessary in *pagtanda*, the themes reappeared during their *kwento* on *matanda na*. As Lolo Frank believed, the values they considered required when they were younger are carried over when they grow older because the lessons learned were retained through triumph or regret.

Money is one of the most essential constructs because it prompts older adults to better themselves by purchasing preventive, maintenance, and treatment medicines and engaging in other wellness activities. Contrary to what other people believe, some of the *lolos* and *lolas* perceived their current state as residents of homes for the aged as a privilege. Some of them recalled how their parents died without any chance for treatment in institutions like nursing homes. They claim that because they do not have enough money, they resort to accepting and succumbing to sickness and, eventually, death. However, their investments and their children's savings have changed how they see illnesses, as money gives them a better chance to guard and improve their health.

Interaction has also affected how the *lolos* and *lolas* view aging as *matanda na*. The participants stated that they welcome visitors whose presence breaks their routine in the homes of the aged. Visitors do not only provide them with gifts and food but also create opportunities for social interaction. Aside from visitors, the participants value their interactions with co-residents and caregivers. For example, Lolo Ignacio deliberately asked people to join him in conversation because he felt alone in his room. Nanay Theresa scheduled weekly video calls with her family to fulfill her social interaction needs. Lolo Frank also agreed that interaction is essential in aging, especially when living in a home for the aged. He even openly suggested better ways for caregivers to interact with older adults to the institution's owner. He believed it was proper for the caregivers to make the residents feel cared for, especially since they are paid for their services.

Successful aging can be manifested in good interpersonal relationships characterized by effective transactions, emotional support, and direct assistance from others (Rowe and Kahn, 1997, as mentioned in Cruz & Camhol, 2014). Communication becomes more critical as individuals age because, while younger people focus on their careers, families, and social roles, older people are motivated to "psychological fulfillment and to achieve life satisfaction" (Aging Today, p. 14).

The construct that made the most impact on the lives of the *logos* and *lolas* was the change in their environment or the transition in their place of residence. Before moving to the home for the aged, their lives were focused on their family and careers. Their experiences of liberal interaction and decision-making authority

were not internalized until they transitioned to a new residence. The dissociation from power deepened after living in a new place and with new acquaintances.

For instance, when Lolo Vicente was asked who brought him to the home for the aged, he quickly corrected me, “This is not home for the aged. This is (long pause)... This is a house for (long pause)... I forgot already. This is just (long pause).” He may have deliberately deflected the thought of living in a home for the aged because of its negative connotation—abandonment and dishonor in the family. Nonetheless, his experience in his new residence limited his interaction with previous relationships and decision-making power.

Other participants did not refer to their current environment as a home for the aged but offered a different label based on what was told to them by relatives who brought them there. Given her health condition, Mommy Theresa was one of the participants who frequently visited hospitals. Eventually, she had to stay in a facilitated home to continue and monitor the treatment she needed. Naturally, she did not want to stay in an unfamiliar place but eventually agreed after being assured of healing by her children. After several months of stay, Mommy Theresa began to feel at ease. She also considered the caregivers her friends and, at some point, treated them as her children. Her apprehensions toward residing in the home for the aged eventually shifted to an interest in building and owning a nursing home for other older adults to retire and heal.

In some cases, when the participants felt uneasy residing in the home for the aged, they compared it to living in a prison. A few years before Lolo Kiko was transferred to the home for the aged, he lived in his brother’s house, which he describes as *kulungan* (prison). He wanted to use *makatakas* (escape) and *makalabas* (get out) – words also used about prison—to indicate his hatred of his brother’s house. His lack of freedom led him to attempt to take his own life: “I was with my brother. My son gave money to my brother as long as he kept me there. But I cannot go out. I cannot escape. I attempted suicide before.” When his son talked to him about moving to a home for the aged, he saw this as a chance to escape from his brother, so he agreed to stay in his new home. However, he immediately regretted his stay a few months later because it still felt like a prison, with the institution adhering to a strict schedule for meals, recreation, and visitation. Eventually, he learned to adjust to the life inside his new residence.

To summarize, relocating to homes for the aged, temporarily or permanently, separates older adults from their spouses, friends, relatives, and workmates. Despite literature stating that older adults often struggle to establish new support systems and lose their prior ones during the transition (O’Neill & Ryan, 2023), the *lolos* and *lolas* eased into the transition by redefining the meaning of their new space. They see it as their family members’ manifestation of reciprocal

## The PCS Review 2024

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care. Placing them in *pagamutan* (place of healing) signals care and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), in contrast to relocating them to a home for the aged (place of abandonment). Home for the aged is consistently associated with a lack of honor from the family for failing to exemplify *utang na loob* and the older adult for not exhibiting behaviors worthy of being kept at home. Parents who are relocated are also stigmatized as bad parents, and the home for the aged is perceived as a place of punishment.

The *lolo* and *lola* participants even praised their children for relocating them to a nursing home, as their children financially supported their lodging and medication, balancing this with their busy schedule. Despite difficult conversations about relocation, which affect their authority over their bodies, they still feel in control by having “produced” offspring that can decide what is best for them. It stands as a reflection of who they are as parents. For some, despite not having control over the decision, having money through savings and retirement funds can be seen as a form of filial power. As Mommy Ruby stated:

My daughter put me here. She paid all the expenses. Everything, I did not lack. It was because she was working. She paid for the fee even though it was expensive here. She did not treat me less. She was a good child.

Older adults’ major life events, such as retirement, health deterioration, and spouse loss, affect their life satisfaction (Ozer, 2004). In the Philippines, these transitions led to problems, such as reduced social interaction, financial issues, and depression and loneliness, to name a few (Avenado, 2003). Despite these problems, older Filipino community dwellers coped by “keeping themselves busy with varied activities at home, taking care of grandchildren, meeting or going out with people, conversing with friends over the phone, and involvement in social, civic, and religious programs” (Avenado, 2003, para. 4). However, older adults living with family tend to have higher life satisfaction than those in nursing homes (Ozer, 2004; Demirkiran, 2013) because these coping mechanisms are not available to older adults who transition to homes for the aged. No matter the adjustments made, they would still choose to spend time in the place where they lived most of their life. Nanay Theresa and Lolo Frank stated:

They asked me if I felt stressed. I told them that I refuse being stressed. I do not want it. At first, I felt like crying. I would choose to stay home, but I am afraid that when our house catches fire, I cannot be moved out easily. (Nanay Theresa) I accept that I have a good fate here, so moving here is not an issue. (LoloFrank)

## The PCS Review 2024

Table 2. Summary of the Definitions and Constructs of Aging

| Definition   | Constructs  |
|--|---|
| <b>A. Pagtanda</b>   |   |
| Kuntento (Contented): Aging is an experience towards contentment | Security in children  |
| Positibo (Positive): Aging is choosing a positive disposition    | Accumulated Experiences<br>Sound Mind and Better Health<br>Spirituality/Religion<br>Marriage/Non-marriage |
| Nalimitahan (Limiting): Aging is a limiting experience           | Parenthood<br>Asawa/ Marriage<br>Spirituality/Religion<br>Unfulfilled goals                               |
| Hindi Maiiwasan (Unavoidable): Aging is an unavoidable process   |   |
| Pagbabago (Change): Aging as change                              |   |
| <b>B. Matanda Na</b>   | Health, Money, and Interaction<br><br>Environment<br>i. Pagamutan<br>ii. Kulungan                         |

### Aging as a Symbol: Contented but not Satisfied

Symbolic interactionism posits that the meaning of an object is not inherent but is created and recreated through a series of interactions. The self, an influencer of conduct, also shapes an object's meaning. Given this premise, varying concepts of the self and interactions can result in varying definitions of a single object. In this study, the construction of the meaning of aging shows similarities and differences according to the participants' lived experiences and their responses to a situation.

(1) *The self, being the subject, also acts as a gatekeeper of older adult interaction.* People naturally seek motivation to talk with people, creating a gauge that signals them to initiate or maintain a conversation. The *lolos* and *lolas* interact with those who mirror their positive self-concept (co-residents and caregivers). They also feel superior to their co-residents and choose to converse only with those they perceive as their equals and those who manifest the characteristics they value most. Contrary to the common perception of older adults being chatty, the participants in the home for the aged were selective about whom to open up to.

Interestingly, the old adults also assign a different meaning of aging to a group of older adults who feel they are part of the “other” group regarding mental and physical capabilities. Despite living in the same space, they still perceive themselves as a superior group to others. Even in shared spaces and experiences within homes for the aged, “othering” or the use of labels like “us versus them” (Carr & Fang, 2022) or disidentifying the self with others (Argen & Pavlidis, 2023) strongly manifested. They assign value to others according to the value they attribute to themselves.

A person’s “I” is the initial and unfiltered response to an object. For example, Lolo Kiko does not want to stay longer in the home for the aged because co-residents annoy him in his room. He responded to his “I” by considering his supportive self-concept, so his “Me” prompted him to refrain from arguing and instead ignore his co-resident. His response to his “I” or “Me,” being supportive, was a closer response to his projected self-concept.

(2) *The meaning of aging is shaped by their most valued roles in situations they consider most important (high-impact).* Symbolic interactionism posits that the self is influenced by interactions as much as the self influences interactions. Through this shaping and reshaping, the meaning (and possibly its variations) of objects is created. Among all the stories shared during the interviews with the *lolos* and *lolas*, several situations greatly impacted how they see themselves and, ultimately, how they define aging. Despite different backgrounds and experiences, they consider the following conditions to greatly impact their lives—marriage, parenthood, and career. These high-impact turning points are either aligned with their goals or those that have disrupted them. They also significantly influence their concept of self, which is also vital in constructing the meaning of aging.

For example, marriage is one of the reasons that prompted Lolo Vicente to label himself lucky. His wife looked after him despite their turbulent relationship, and his children remotely cared for his needs during his relocation to a home for the aged. At the same time, some of the *lolos* and *lolas* prefer to be called Tatay or Daddy rather than *lolo* or *lola* because they identify more with being parents. Lolo Ignacio perceives himself as supportive because he provided his children with monetary and moral support and helped his *kababayan* land a job abroad. Even during his relocation, he claims to have supported his co-residents and caregivers by introducing them to connections outside the home for the aged.

The transition to a new environment was undoubtedly considered a high-impact situation. As argued in the earlier part of the paper, the *lolos* and *lolas* feel the shift in familial power from them to their children. Their initial resistance to the change was later replaced by surrender to the decision because they trusted in their children. Therefore, despite the initial reluctance to relocate, their “Me”

responded affirmatively to the decision. While residing in the home for the aged, their lives have also been a signpost of how they see aging. Their new co-residents become new co-actors in creating the meaning of aging and helping reinforce their self-concept. Their interaction with co-residents and caregivers heightens their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with aging.

Other *lolos* adapted to the relocation by relabeling a harmful object. Instead of seeing a home for the aged as a place that contextually proposes a negative image of negligence and abandonment, some of the *lolos* and *lolas* label it as *pagamutan* or a place of physical healing. Changing an object's purpose or label requires a change of behavior in response to the audience. The behavior of the *lolos* and *lolas* could include self-pity and dissociation or disengagement from their marriage, relationship with their children, and careers.

First, homes for the aged are seen as liminal place where they can soon leave after being healed rather than a terminal place for abandonment. The liminal space also enables them to maintain their self-concept despite being in a different environment. When the home for the aged is associated with abandonment, it places actors such as administrators and caregivers in positions of superior power over the "abandoned." However, when it is seen as a place of healing, the "patients" or "clients" hold the upper hand over the caregivers because of the paid service. The label they assign according to how they position themselves from the object affects how they act on the object.

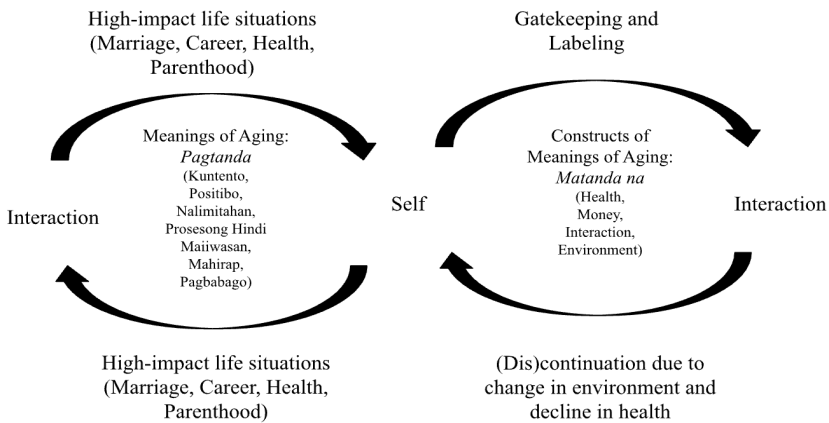
(3) *The meaning of aging is a product of the labels of the self and interactions.* The *lolos*' and *lolas*' positive definitions of aging are arguably a product of the construction and reconstruction of the narratives during their reminiscence. Human beings can inhibit possible responses and form images of themselves according to how they like the self to be projected. Alternating the "impulsive I" and "reflective Me" has been their way of regulating their behavior (Hewitt, 2007). Generally, aging has been associated with *contentment* (the state where an individual feels gratified by choice) but *never satisfied* (many limiting and fulfilled desires). These dissatisfactions come from discontinuity of ambitions and careers, broken marriages, and disengagement from relationships. Most of those who have felt these dissatisfactions are the *lolos* who are ambitious but, because of health decline and marriage problems, were unable to achieve their goals. Yet again, reminiscing and reflecting on the past helps them move beyond these dissatisfactions and negotiate a more balanced view of aging. Arguably, reminiscence as a method also helps construct the meaning of aging positively.

Moreover, the *lolos* and *lolas*' behaviors and selves in the home for the aged are also a product of the negotiated self, which they constructed even before they resided there. The negotiation and reconstruction of the self were continual;

they were not discontinued or disengaged regardless of the change in physical self, environment, and co-actors. The established self-concept, which has been negotiated most of their lives, was enduring and still acted even in the home for the aged.

Additionally, the *lolos'* and *lolas'* go-to definition of aging is a natural, unavoidable, and consistent process for everyone. These terms were used to explain aging as something not deliberately acknowledged in the past. These are meanings of aging as known in science and society rather than meanings being products of individual interaction and the self. The “naturalness” of aging can also be associated with the participants’ perceptions of those who have aged before them compared to their aging process.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model of the Construction of the Meaning of Aging of Older Adults in Homes for the Aged.



The research findings on the meanings of aging are illustrated above. Symbolic interactionism generally frames meaning-making as the product of self and interaction. In discussing the meaning-making of aging for the residents of homes for the aged in Metro Manila, the role of self and interaction was also applied. The meaning of aging is constructed during the process of *pagtanda* and then reconstructed during *matanda na*. These two terms were coined after interviews with the participants, resulting in different meanings in two phases of aging.

Insights also brought important keywords in understanding aging communication and meaning construction—high-impact experiences, positive self-concept, othering, relationships, and mindful interactions. All these key terms highlight the significance of symbolic and symbiotic relationships built as



individuals age (*pagtanda* and *matanda na*) and form their concept of aging. This study also highlights the importance of using *pakikipagkwentuhan* and reminiscence in communication research, especially in aging studies, life reviews, and sense-making, to highlight how participants negotiate and reconstruct ideas during interviews.

### Limitations and Recommendations

It is also important to highlight the contextual limitations of the study. First, the cosmopolitan nature of Metro Manila, including the rise of working women, influences family members' views on aging, family relationships, and obligations. They are more open to relocating their elderly to homes for the aged due to the changing landscapes of work and caregiving. The growing number of dual-income households has led to overwhelmed caregivers in the family. In contrast, families outside Metro Manila emphasize intergenerational caregiving and still believe in the co-residential and extended family setup as the proper way of aging. Other countries, such as India (Lamb, 2009), have emphasized the tensions of emerging cosmopolitan spaces and behaviors and conventional values ascribed to caring for the elderly. It is, therefore, difficult to generalize "content" as synonymous with aging among all elderly care facilities.

Second, these paid and private homes for the aged resemble small homes located in quiet, village-like areas. They mirror a house, complete with a receiving area, bedroom, and yard. The dynamics between the administrators and the residents are more horizontal than those in public living facilities. Older adults are not entirely powerless; they are assertive of their rights as *clients* or *patients*.

Third, the decision of the "next generation senior citizens" not to marry (either by choice or due to lack of consenting law) or have children changes their constructs of aging. Their life choices, such as being more career-oriented, nomadic, and technology-savvy, are seen as highly probable indicators of change in the meaning of aging. If society starts preparing for aging, policies can be tailored to these changes as early as now.

Lastly, this study also has implications for policymaking. Quality social interactions and built relationships were the primary daily needs of the residents of the homes for the aged. Some participants were unsatisfied with their stay because of the limited activities, freedom, and conversations they had with their co-residents and caregivers. Owners and administrators can use this insight to improve their facilities' living conditions and enhance residents' social interaction.

It is therefore recommended that future research on aging and communication focus on the following: (1) since aging identities are negotiated and shaped positively in spatial transitions, the aging identities of older adults in other

## The PCS Review 2024

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spatial transitions, such as diaspora and other intersectionalities, should be looked into, (2) since older adults revealed many negotiations of tension points to continue and manage the impression of self and relationships, personal and relational dialectics in aging experiences may be conducted, and lastly, (3) since older adults their children's judgment despite the negative associations of home for the aged, research on family and intergenerational disclosures of power and dominance should be pursued.

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## The PCS Review 2024

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