

## Using Chapman's Five Love Languages Theory to Predict Love and Relationship Satisfaction

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**ABSTRACT.** Chapman (2015) proposed a popular love language theory about couples' communication of love. For the present study, we predicted that partners who perceived that their partner used their preferred love language well would report greater feelings of love and relationship satisfaction. We expected this would be the same for both women and men, as well as those in heterosexual and gay relationships. We recruited 981 individuals in couples to complete online surveys. Using multiple regression, we found support for our hypothesis that a partner's perception that their partner was using their preferred love language well would increase love (i.e., words of affirmation  $R^2 = .26$ , quality time  $R^2 = .23$ , gifts  $R^2 = .17$ , acts of service  $R^2 = .25$ , and physical touch  $R^2 = .24$ ) and relationship satisfaction (i.e., words of affirmation  $R^2 = .32$ , quality time  $R^2 = .24$ , gifts  $R^2 = .11$ , acts of service  $R^2 = .20$ , and physical touch  $R^2 = .24$ ). Unexpectedly, we found that women who thought their partners were using their preferred love language (i.e., gifts, acts of service, and physical touch) well reported greater feelings of love as compared to men. This research provided some support for teaching people in romantic relationships how to learn and use their partner's preferred love languages well. In addition, partners should be taught to recognize when their partners are attempting to use their preferred love language because this could lead to increased feelings of love and relationship satisfaction.

**Keywords:** love languages, couples, love, relationship satisfaction, Chapman, gay couples

Chapman (2015) proposed that a main reason for relationship problems is that couples speak different *love languages*. For couples to effectively communicate, each partner must learn to speak the love language that their partner prefers. His love languages theory includes words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch.

Polk and Egbert (2013) suggested that future research on the love languages should gather data on behaviors that partners perceive they are receiving. For the current study, we followed their suggestion and assessed whether the perception that a partner was using a love language well predicted love and relationship satisfaction for the other partner. We also evaluated sexual orientation and gender identity as predictors.

For this study we used the Love Languages Profile written by Chapman (2015) to assess the love languages. Most research has not used his scale. Instead, the authors developed their own scales based on the theory. Bland and McQueen (2018) argued that not using Chapman's inventory has led to measurement issues that could have affected the results of these studies and created mixed results. They also contended that the scale that Chapman developed is conceptually closer to his model as compared to the scales developed by the other authors. Some of those scales also have had poor reliability coefficients (e.g., Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017).

In this article, we define the love languages and give information about how to determine an individual's preferred love language or languages.

Then, we review the connection between the love languages and both love and relationship satisfaction. Finally, we review some of the research that has been conducted on the love languages.

### **Love Languages**

Chapman (2015) noted that all five of the love languages are equally important, but that people differ on the ones they prefer. The first love language is *words of affirmation*. He stated that people want to be appreciated, and the way partners verbally communicate this appreciation is important. A soft tone is needed, and it is also important to use kind words and make humble requests. Another way to affirm a partner is by complimenting the partner in the presence of friends, family, or coworkers. He argued that complimenting the partner will make the partner feel loved because their partner is expressing admiration in front of others.

The second love language is *quality time*. Chapman (2015) defined this love language as giving a partner undivided attention, which means that partners are doing something together with focused attention on each other. This attention creates a sense of togetherness. A second way to experience quality time is by having quality conversation. This conversation should involve sympathetic dialogue with partners sharing their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires without interruption. He stated that this type of sympathetic dialogue is crucial for feeling loved. He also added that quality conversation is different from words of affirmation in that the focus is on what the person is hearing from their partner rather than on what the person is saying to the partner.

The third love language is *receiving gifts*. Chapman (2015) found that gift giving is a fundamental expression of love across cultures. By exchanging gifts, the person is investing in their relationship. However, Chapman noted that gifts do not have to cost money; instead, what is important is that, for some people, gifts feel like a tangible symbol of love.

The fourth love language is *acts of service*. Chapman (2015) stated that this involves doing things that a partner knows their partner would like for them to do. These acts often involve household chores. He added that if they are done with positive thought, energy, and planning they can be perceived as expressions of love because they convey that one partner was thinking about the other.

The fifth love language is *physical touch*. Chapman (2015) argued that it is a powerful way

to communicate love. It can include touching, hugging, holding hands, kissing, or sexual acts. The key is learning the type of touch that is wanted.

### **Determining the Preferred Love Language or Languages**

Chapman (2015) gave several methods in his book for discovering a person's preferred love language. First, he developed the Five Love Languages Profile, which is an online scale that can be used to find people's preferred love languages. This scale was used in the current research. Another way to find a person's preferred love language is to ask the following questions: "First, what does your partner do or not do that hurts deeply?" "Second, what have you requested that you partner do most often?" and "Third, how do you regularly express love to your partner?" These questions allow people to see what is important to them and therefore indicates a preferred love language. A third way he suggested to find a preferred love language involves asking the question, "What would an ideal partner be like?" The desired qualities for the ideal partner can be used to pinpoint expectations about desired ways to receive love.

### **Love Languages, Love, and Relationship Satisfaction**

Chapman (2015) proposed that when partners speak each other's preferred love language they will feel love and greater relationship satisfaction. He suggested that partners have *emotional love tanks*. An empty love tank can cause romantic withdrawal or falling out of love, harsh interactions, or inappropriate behaviors. Conversely, couples with a full love tank are able to deal with conflict and cope with their differences. Understanding the love languages, and learning to use the preferred one for a partner, can lead to filling the love tank. Chapman suggested that receiving the preferred love language is more important for keeping the tank full than receiving a combination of all five love languages. He postulated that learning to express a partner's love language often requires effort and discipline, and when done intentionally, it is most likely to lead to feelings of love and greater relationship satisfaction. Problems arise when partners do not know their partners love language(s) or when they do not know how to use them. This can lead to the partner instead giving the love language they prefer to receive, which might not be seen as caring and could contribute to decreased feelings of love or relationship satisfaction for their partner.

Chapman added that partners must recognize when their partner is using their love language and that miscommunicating in this way can lead to empty love tanks and dissatisfaction for the couple.

### **Prior Research Using the Love Language Theory**

Not much research has been conducted on Chapman's (1992) love language theory (Bland & McQueen, 2018). Six articles have been published in professional journals (i.e., Bland & McQueen, 2018; Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017; Egbert & Polk, 2006; Goff et al., 2007; Nichols et al., 2018; Polk & Egbert, 2013), one article in an undergraduate journal (i.e., Cook et al., 2013), and one article was presented at a conference (i.e., Leaver & Green, 2005). In addition, four dissertations have been written about the love languages (i.e., Moitinho, 2000; Salas, 2009; Thatcher, 2004; Veale, 2006).

Bland and McQueen (2018) grouped the research that has been conducted into three categories. The first category of research included studies that evaluated the factor structure of the love language theory (Chapman, 1992). Three groups of authors used factor analysis to evaluate the factor structure of scales they developed to assess the love language theory with mixed results. For example, both Goff et al. (2007) and Cook et al. (2013) evaluated questionnaires they developed to determine people's love languages instead of using Chapman's (2015) Love Language Profile. Undergraduate students completed their surveys, which also limited the generalizability of their findings. Goff et al. (2007) found six factors including the ones Chapman used, but divided acts of service into two groups: domestic service and manual service. However, after completing confirmatory factor analyses, Cook et al. (2013) did not find factors that represented Chapman's (1992) five love languages. They noted that future research should instead use the Love Language Profile developed by Chapman (2015). They believed it might provide the best evidence for legitimacy of the love languages.

The second category of research given by Bland and McQueen (2018) included research that established evidence for the construct validity of the Love Language model (Chapman, 1992). Egbert and Polk (2006) found that the five factors were correlated with Stafford et al. (2000) relational maintenance typology (i.e., assurances, social networks, openness, positivity, and shared tasks). Those who scored high on the relational maintenance categories also scored high on the love language factors.

The third category of research given by Bland and McQueen (2018) included studies that tested partners' preferred love languages and the quality of their relationships. The current study falls into this category. As for prior research, Thatcher (2004) and Veale (2006) used the love language theory (Chapman, 1992) and assessed couples' marital satisfaction and love. Neither study supported Chapman's theory, but Bunt and Hazelwood (2017) noted that these studies had narrow participant pools and methodological flaws. Thatcher's research only examined love language category membership but did not look at expressions of that love language, which Chapman (2015) proposed to be more important for relationship satisfaction.

Polk and Egbert (2013) tested whether partners who express love in ways that align with their partner's primary love language would have more fulfilling relationships. They had couples report their preferred love language using Egbert and Polk's (2006) 20-item Love Language Scale and did not use Chapman's (1992) inventory. The authors wanted to evaluate situations where both partners receive their desired love languages, only one partner received the desired love language, or neither partner receives the desired love language. To do this, they categorized each couple based on their love language preference and formed matches, partial matches, and mismatches. The most frequently occurring couple type represented a mismatch. The authors tested Chapman's prediction that couples who give and receive one another's preferred love language experience greater relationship quality. The Quality of Relationships Inventory by Pierce (1994) was used to assess relationship quality. This inventory assesses social support and has subscales for depth, support, and conflict. They found that matched and mismatched couples reported greater relationship quality as compared to partially matched couples. They stated that their findings provided little support for Chapman's love language theory. However, their findings could be a result of not using the Love Language Profile developed by Chapman (2015). They also used depth, support, and conflict to assess relationship quality, instead of love and relationship satisfaction, which Chapman mentioned in his book.

For the present study, we predicted that partners who perceive that their partner uses their preferred love language well would report greater feelings of love and relationship satisfaction. We expected this would be the same for those in heterosexual and gay relationships, as well as for

women and men. However, we did not expect to find couple type or gender identity to be a predictor because relationship quality and satisfaction has been found to be comparable for both women and men in gay relationships and heterosexual couples (Herek, 2006; Kurdek, 2005; Mackey et al., 2004). In addition, Chapman (1992) proposed that the love languages were gender neutral and applied equally to women and men.

## Method

### Participants

The 981 participants in this study consisted of 520 cisgender women and 461 cisgender men involved in heterosexual (346 women, 293 men), lesbian (174 women), and gay male (168 men) relationships who lived in the United States. Nine additional participants who marked “other” and wrote transgender without specifying the gender they identified with or agender were not kept in the data. Because we were specifically looking at participants in heterosexual relationships and gay relationships, we also did not include in the analyses another 23 participants who marked other and wrote bisexual, pansexual, demisexual, asexual, questioning, queer, fluid, or prefer not to answer. Participants were 18–24 (23.1%), 25–34 (37.9%), 35–44 (17.7%), 45–54 (11.7%), 55–64 (7.5%), and over 65 (2.1%). Sixteen participants did not list their age. Participants listed their racial background as being 72.4% White, 7.5% Hispanic, 7.3% Black, 7.0% Asian, 2.9% multiracial, 1.9% Native American, or 1.1% other. Four participants did not list their race. Most participants had attended some college (30.8%), had a bachelor’s degree (37.1%), or had a graduate degree (26.4%). All participants lived with their partners, and 45.6% were married. Five participants did not answer the question about being married. Seventeen percent of participants had children, and 66.5% of those currently lived with their parents. The couples reported living with their partners for 1–6 months (7.3%), 6–12 months (8.3%), 1–2 years (14.0%), 2–3 years (10.7%), 3–5 years (12.7%), 5–7 years (8.7%), 7–10 years (8.7%), and greater than 10 years (29.6%).

### Measures

#### Love

The components of love (i.e., intimacy, passion, and commitment) were measured using Sternberg’s Triangular Love Scale (Sternberg, 1988). Sternberg (1997) defined intimacy as feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bonding; passion as the drives

that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual activity; and commitment as the decision to maintain the relationship. The scale has 45 questions. An example item for intimacy is “I have a warm relationship with my partner,” an example item for passion is “I find myself thinking about my partner frequently during the day,” and an example item for commitment is “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.” Participants used a 9-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*extremely*). Higher scores indicated greater love. Hendrick and Hendrick (1989) found that all three subscales demonstrated strong, positive correlations with the Passionate Love Scale by Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) and with Davis’s viability, intimacy, passion, care, and satisfaction subscales and negative correlations with the conflict subscale from the Davis Relationship Rating Form (Davis & Todd, 1982). Hendrick and Hendrick (1989) reported an alpha of .97 when using Sternberg’s scale, and for the present study, we found an alpha reliability coefficient of .98.

#### Love Languages

The Love Language Profile written by Chapman (2015) was used to assess the ways individuals in relationships communicate including: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Participants were given 30 items and asked to pick from two options for each. Participants received a point for each question and those points were then paired with each of the five love languages. The subscale with the most points was the preferred love language. Some participants had two preferred love languages because their scores tied. Permission to use the scale was received by the author of the scale.

#### Partner’s Perceived Use of Love Language

Participants were given Chapman’s (1992) definitions of the five love languages. They were then asked, “When you think about your relationship with your partner, how well does your partner do using the following categories: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch?” Participants used a 5-point scale, *poorly* to *extremely well*, for each love language, and the higher the score corresponded to participants feeling that their partner was using their perceived love language better.

#### Relationship Satisfaction

The Relationship Assessment Scale is a 7-item measure developed by Hendrick (1988). An example

item is “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” and participants answered each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*low satisfaction*) to 5 (*high satisfaction*). Higher scores indicated greater relationship satisfaction. This scale has a .80 correlation with the longer and more widely used Spanier (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Hendrick (1988) found an alpha reliability coefficient of .86 for the scale. For the present study, a .86 alpha reliability coefficient was also found.

### Procedure

After IRB approval, 32 research assistants recruited 517 individuals who were in relationships (i.e., 234 heterosexual women, 122 heterosexual men, 101 lesbian women, and 60 gay men) using flyers sent through email and posted on social media (i.e., Facebook). Paper flyers were posted on campus bulletin boards. Another 464 participants (i.e., 171 heterosexual men, 112 heterosexual women, 108 gay men, and 73 lesbian women) were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). They were paid \$0.50 to participate. We added the use of MTurk a few weeks after beginning data collection because we worried that we would not get enough gay men and lesbians as participants, and we looked at the data and saw that not many participants’ preferred love language was gifts. By using MTurk, we widened our participant pool and made it more likely that our numbers for each love language would increase. All participants were asked to take the same online survey using SurveyMonkey. To be considered for the study, individuals had to be involved in a relationship, living together, live in the United States, and had to be able to take the survey online.

Participants were asked to complete surveys about the love languages, relationship satisfaction, and love. The surveys also asked about demographic information. Participation was voluntary, but both the convenience sampling participants and the MTurk participants who agreed to participate were entered in a drawing to possibly win one of four \$50 Amazon gift cards.

Before running our analyses, we compared the participants from the convenience sampling and MTurk for the demographics and variables in the study. The convenience sample had more women (66.11% as compared to 40.73%) and less racial diversity (i.e., 3.9% as compared to 10.9% Black participants, 5.85% as compared to 8.17% Asian participants, 77.53% as compared to 66.66% White participants, .39% as compared to 2.58% Native

American participants), and had more participants with graduate degrees (31.37% as compared to 20.26%). We did not find differences between the samples for participants being married. Just fewer than half of the participants from the convenience sample and MTurk were married.

Using Mann-Whitney *U* tests, we compared age and length of time together for the couples. We found the convenience sampling group (*Mdn* rank = 519.22) had been together as a couple longer as compared to the MTurk group (*Mdn* rank = 459.81),  $U = 1057461.00$ ,  $p = .001$ . However, the samples did not differ when it came to age,  $U = 109795.00$ ,  $p = .139$ .

Using independent-samples *t* tests, we found that love was significantly higher for the convenience sampling group ( $M = 356.36$ ,  $SD = 46.60$ ) as compared to the MTurk group ( $M = 333.25$ ,  $SD = 63.98$ ),  $t(923) = 6.28$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = 0.41$ , and we found that relationship satisfaction was also significantly higher for the convenience sampling group ( $M = 30.37$ ,  $SD = 4.17$ ) as compared to the MTurk group ( $M = 29.21$ ,  $SD = 4.87$ ),  $t(947) = 3.97$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = 0.26$ .

### Results

The top preferred love languages were quality time (40.8%) and physical touch (40.0%). The other love languages had lower percentages (i.e., words of affirmation, 22.7%; acts of service, 13.6%; and gifts, 4.0%). Some participants tied for their preferred love languages and those were represented in the percentages listed above. Therefore, the percentages exceed 100%.

Table 1 contains information about the number of participants in each love language and how well participants felt that their partners were using their preferred love language or languages. More than 50% of participants marked that their partner was using their preferred love language or languages well or extremely well for each love language.

Prior to conducting our hierarchical multiple regressions, we tested the relevant assumptions of this statistical analysis as put forth by Tabachnick and Fidell (2012). First, our sample size seemed adequate given the independent variables included in the analyses. The assumption of singularity was met as our independent variables were not a combination of other independent variables. An examination of correlations (see Table 2) revealed that none of our independent variables were highly correlated. Our collinearity statistics, including

Tolerance and VIF, were within acceptable limits. Our Mahalanobis distance scores did not indicate that we had multivariate outliers. Finally, our residual and scatter plots indicated that the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity were met.

Because we found differences in our convenience and MTurk samples for love and relationship satisfaction, we ran our analyses separately for each group. However, the sample size for gifts was only three participants and therefore was too low to run the analyses for that love language. Because of this, we decided to run our analyses using the combined groups.

For the analyses, participants were grouped by their preferred love language and then hierarchical regressions were run for each love language. We found the following results.

For those who had the preferred love language of words of affirmation, the perception that their partners did well with using words of affirmation predicted greater love (the model accounted for 26% of the variance,  $F[1, 210] = 77.50, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [23.07, 36.38]$ ) and greater relationship satisfaction (the model accounted for 32% of the variance,  $F[1, 215] = 104.31, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.04, 3.01]$ ). Sexual orientation and gender identity were not found to be predictors for love or relationship satisfaction. See Table 3.

For those who had the preferred love language of quality time, the perception that their partners did well with spending quality time with them predicted greater love (the model accounted for 23% of the variance,  $F[1, 376] = 112.94, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [20.73, 30.14]$ ) and predicted greater relationship satisfaction (the model accounted for 24% of the variance,  $F[1, 384] = 122.59, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.76, 2.51]$ ). Sexual orientation and gender identity were not found to be predictors of relationship satisfaction. See Table 4.

For those who had the preferred love language of gifts, both the perception that their partners did well with giving them gifts and gender identity were predictors of greater love (the model accounted for 17% of the variance,  $F[1, 34] = 5.51, p = .025, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.31, 46.13]$ ). Sexual orientation was not found to be a predictor. Also, for those who had the preferred love language of gifts, the perception that their partners did well with giving them gifts predicted relationship satisfaction (the model accounted for 11% of the variance,  $F[1, 34] = 4.46, p = .04, 95\% \text{ CI } [.06, 3.27]$ ). Sexual orientation and gender identity were not found to be predictors of relationship satisfaction. See Table 5.

For those who had the preferred love language of acts of service, both the perception that their partners did well with performing acts of service and gender identity predicted greater love (the model accounted for 25% of the variance,  $F[1, 120] = 29.31, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [15.95, 34.33]$ ). Sexual orientation was not a predictor of love. Also, for those who had the preferred love language of acts of service, the perception that their partners did well with performing acts of service predicted greater relationship satisfaction (the model accounted for 20% of the variance,  $F[1, 121] = 28.79, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.17, 2.53]$ ). Sexual orientation and gender identity were not found to be predictors of relationship satisfaction. See Table 6.

For those who had the preferred love language of physical touch, both the perception that their partners did well with physical touch and gender identity predicted greater love (the model accounted for 24% of the variance,

**TABLE 1**

**Percent of Participants Who Felt Their Partners Were Using Their Preferred Love Language or Languages Poorly to Extremely Well**

Love Languages	Poorly	Somewhat Poorly	Average	Well	Extremely Well
Words of affirmation ( $n = 220$ )	4.5	6.8	28.2	33.6	26.8
Quality time ( $n = 395$ )	1.0	4.8	15.4	37.2	41.5
Gifts ( $n = 39$ )	7.7	15.4	25.6	38.5	12.8
Acts of service ( $n = 129$ )	6.2	4.7	21.7	29.5	38.0
Physical touch ( $n = 385$ )	1.6	6.2	13.5	30.1	48.6

**TABLE 2**

**Correlations for the Independent Variables (i.e., Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and the Perception That Partners Are Using the Love Languages Well) and the Dependent Variables (i.e., Love and Relationship Satisfaction)**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Sexual orientation	–							
2. Gender identity	–.03	–						
3. Using words of affirmation well	.08*	–.02	–					
4. Using quality time well	.06	–.01	.45***	–				
5. Using gifts well	.08*	–.11***	.32***	.27***	–			
6. Using acts of service well	.03	.01	.24***	.27***	.29***	–		
7. Using physical touch well	–.04	.03	.43***	.43***	.25***	.26***	–	
8. Love	–.05	.10**	.49***	.48***	.25***	.29***	.52***	–
9. Relationship satisfaction	–.03	.05	.53***	.55***	.29***	.30***	.49***	.80***

*Note.* Higher score indicates greater magnitude. All analyses were two-tailed. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**TABLE 3**

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and the Perception of the Love Language Words of Affirmation Being Used Well Predicting Love and Relationship Satisfaction**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$
<b>Predicting Love</b>									
Sexual orientation	-.28	4.15	-.01	-2.37	4.53	-.04	-5.66	3.90	-.09
Gender identity				10.69	9.37	.09	11.60	8.04	.09
Using words of affirmation well							29.73	3.38	.52***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.01			-.01			.26	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.01			1.30			77.50***	
<b>Predicting Relationship Satisfaction</b>									
Sexual orientation	.20	.31	.04	.23	.35	.05	-.06	.29	-.01
Gender identity				-.14	.71	-.02	.01	.59	.01
Using words of affirmation well							2.52	.25	.57***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.01			-.01			.32	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.42			.04			104.31***	

Note. *N*s = 210 and 215.  
\*\*\**p* < .001.

**TABLE 4**

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and the Perception of the Love Language Quality Time Being Used Well Predicting Love and Relationship Satisfaction**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	$\beta$
<b>Predicting Love</b>									
Sexual orientation	2.32	2.27	.05	.78	2.59	.02	-.87	2.28	-.02
Gender identity				6.99	5.65	.07	9.60	4.97	.10
Using quality time well							25.44	2.39	.48***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.01			.01			.23	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		1.04			1.53			112.94***	
<b>Predicting Relationship Satisfaction</b>									
Sexual orientation	.10	.18	.03	.05	.21	.01	-.10	.18	-.03
Gender identity				.24	.46	.03	.43	.40	.05
Using quality time well							2.13	.19	.49***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.01			-.01			.24	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.32			.29			122.59***	

Note. *N*s = 376 and 384.  
\*\*\**p* < .001.

**TABLE 5**

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and the Perception of the Love Language Gifts Being Used Well Predicting Love and Relationship Satisfaction**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
<b>Predicting Love</b>									
Sexual orientation	8.81	26.46	.06	7.90	25.26	.05	12.24	23.84	.08
Gender identity				54.07	25.45	.34*	51.47	23.97	.32*
Using gifts well							24.72	10.54	.35*
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.03			.07			.17	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.11			4.52*			5.51*	
<b>Predicting Relationship Satisfaction</b>									
Sexual orientation	-.28	1.91	-.02	-.34	1.86	-.03	-.04	1.78	-.01
Gender identity				3.24	1.88	.28	3.06	1.79	.27
Using gifts well							1.67	.79	.33*
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.03			.03			.11	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.02			2.98			4.46*	

*Note.* *Ns* = 34 and 34.  
\**p* < .05.

**TABLE 6**

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and the Perception of the Love Language Acts of Service Being Used Well Predicting Love and Relationship Satisfaction**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
<b>Predicting Love</b>									
Sexual orientation	-19.37	12.66	-.14	-11.80	12.54	-.08	-14.26	11.30	-.10
Gender identity				35.91	12.14	.26**	34.04	10.93	.25**
Using acts of service well							25.14	4.64	.42***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.01			.07			.25	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		2.34			8.75**			29.31***	
<b>Predicting Relationship Satisfaction</b>									
Sexual orientation	-1.25	.91	-.12	-1.01	.93	-.01	-1.17	.84	-.11
Gender identity				1.12	.90	.11	.96	.81	.10
Using acts of service well							1.85	.35	.43***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.01			.01			.20	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		1.86			1.54			28.79***	

*Note.* *Ns* = 120 and 121.  
\*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.



**TABLE 7**

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and the Perception of the Love Language Physical Touch Being Used Well Predicting Love and Relationship Satisfaction**

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
<b>Predicting Love</b>									
Sexual orientation	.51	2.54	.01	-3.21	2.90	-.07	-3.15	2.54	-.07
Gender identity				15.98	6.13	.16**	10.98	5.40	.11**
Using physical touch well							25.21	2.41	.48***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.01			.01			.24	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.04			6.80**			109.68***	
<b>Predicting Relationship Satisfaction</b>									
Sexual orientation	.14	.21	.04	-.04	.23	-.01	.02	.21	.01
Gender identity				.79	.50	.09	.35	.44	.04
Using physical touch well							2.09	.19	.49***
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>		-.01			.01			.24	
<i>F</i> for change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.46			2.54			116.10***	

Note. *N*s = 364 and 375.  
 \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

$F[1, 364] = 109.68, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [20.48, 29.95]$ ). Sexual orientation was not a predictor of love. For those who had the preferred love language of physical touch, the perception that their partners did well with physical touch predicted greater relationship satisfaction (the model accounted for 24% of the variance,  $F[1, 375] = 116.10, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.71, 2.47]$ ). Sexual orientation and gender identity were not found to be predictors of relationship satisfaction. See Table 7.

To evaluate our significant findings for gender identity, we used post-hoc *t* tests. We found that women ( $M = 305.25, SD = 79.29$ ) reported greater love than men ( $M = 249.61, SD = 72.93$ ) when their preferred love language was gifts and they felt like their partner was doing well with giving gifts,  $t(37) = 2.26, p = .03, d = 0.73$ . We also found that women ( $M = 338.65, SD = 52.03$ ) reported greater love than men ( $M = 300.42, SD = 79.69$ ) when their preferred love language was acts of service and they felt like their partner was providing acts of services well,  $t(122) = 3.22, p = .002, d = 0.57$ . In addition, we found that women ( $M = 360.80, SD = 45.07$ ) reported greater love than men ( $M = 348.24, SD = 56.03$ ) when their preferred love language was physical touch and they felt like their partner was using physical touch well,  $t(367) = 2.36, p = .019, d = 0.25$ .

**Discussion**

Although Chapman’s (1992) love language theory is often used by those in the helping professions (Bland & McQueen, 2018; Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017) and quoted by those who have read Chapman’s books (Egbert & Polk, 2006), very little research has been conducted on the theory. For this research study, we predicted that partners who perceived that their partner used their preferred love language well would report greater feelings of love and relationship satisfaction. We expected this would be true for both women and men, as well as heterosexual and gay couples.

We found support for our hypothesis, in that partners who perceived that their partners were using their preferred love language (i.e., words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, or physical touch) well reported greater love and relationship satisfaction. This supports Chapman’s (2015) claim that partners hope to see certain love language behaviors from their partners and, when they do, they fill their love tanks and experience greater love and relationship satisfaction. Our results run counter to the research conducted by Thatcher (2004) and Veale (2006), which used Chapman’s love language theory to assess couples’ marital satisfaction and love but did not

find significant results. However, as noted in the literature review, Bunt and Hazelwood (2017) stated that the studies had methodological flaws.

Unexpectedly, we found that women who felt their partners were using their preferred love language of gifts, acts of service, or physical touch well reported greater feelings of love. This could tie into the research by Schoenfeld et al. (2012). They found that women and men are equally likely to show affection but express love differently. In their sample, the married women expressed love by having fewer negative interactions, and the married men showed love by initiating sex, sharing leisure activities, and doing household work with their partners. It could be that the women in heterosexual relationships in our sample were responding to the men showing love by initiating sex (i.e., physical touch) and doing household work with their partners (i.e., acts of service) and therefore felt more love. More research needs to be conducted to look into this.

As predicted, we did not find sexual orientation to be a significant part of the model. This finding supports applying the theory to both heterosexual and gay couples. Chapman (1992, 2015) focuses on heterosexual couples in his books, but we suggest that his theory would also be useful for gay couples to learn and use.

Instead of just teaching couples about the theory, couples should learn about how to effectively use their partner's preferred love language so that their partner can notice the effort that is being made. Psychologists and counselors could be trained to teach clients about using their partner's preferred love language. They would want to discuss the importance of determining when a partner is attempting to communicate using a love language, so that couples do not get frustrated at failed attempts to communicate in this way. They would also want to discuss the use of love languages as a process and that it can take time to learn how to communicate in this new way.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This research contributed to the limited research on the love languages. This study was one of only a few research studies to use the Love Language Profile written by Chapman (2015) and the first to run analyses after selecting participants based on their preferred love language or love languages. This study also included participants who were living together, with many of them being married, instead of primarily college students who were only

dating (e.g., Cook et al., 2013; Egbert & Polk, 2006; Goff et al., 2007; Polk & Egbert, 2013). Using a noncollege sample helps to make the results more generalizable. Another strength of this research is that a large sample size was obtained, which was important because the sample was divided into the five love languages. Gifts and acts of service were not as commonly reported in the sample, but we still had enough participants in each group to run our analyses.

A limitation of this study is that a convenience sampling technique and MTurk were used and therefore, the sample was not random. Another limitation is that partners' feelings were only evaluated at one time and how they responded to the questionnaires could have been impacted by something that had happened recently. Therefore, their responses might not have reflected their typical feelings or how their feelings change over time. Another limitation was that, because participants were split into groups based on their preferred love languages, the sample size for gifts was especially small. Additional research should be conducted using a larger dataset with more participants with gifts as their preferred love language to see if these findings can be replicated.

### **Future Directions**

Researchers investigating the love languages might want to consider the following issues in future research. Chapman's (2015) scale is a forced-option scale with 30 possible points divided among the five love languages. His intent is to have participants score higher on one of the subscales than the others. His procedure makes sense in that he wants to quickly determine what is important to the person. However, in the present study, some participants scored the maximum score for a love language, which is a 12, whereas others had lower scores for their preferred love language. It would be interesting to know if participants' higher scores mean that love language is even more important to them. For some participants, their scores on one love language might be a 12 and an 11 on another love language. It could mean that both are important to the person, but by using Chapman's (1992) scoring method it appears that the highest score is the more important love language. Some people might expect to receive love using multiple preferred love languages, and the effect could be additive further increasing love and relationship satisfaction felt in relationships. This also would be interesting to investigate in future research.

For the present research, participants were asked if they felt their partner was using their partner's love languages well. This highlights that perception is important. It could be that partners are attempting to use the love languages, but they are not being perceived as doing so. Future research might include behavioral observations to see when actual love language acts occur and then ask partners about their perceptions.

Chapman's (1992) theory has generated a large group of supporters. Therefore, it is important to continue to study his theory in order to find data to support or refute his theory.

Longitudinal work would be interesting to conduct. Couples could be taught how to use each other's love language and then be evaluated over time to see how their relationships change. It would be interesting to look at major life events and whether or not using partners' love languages consistently is effective even when couples are facing stressors. It could be that couples feel like their love tanks are full during certain periods of their lives and that events such as having children, which is known to strain relationships (Doss et al., 2009), could make their love tanks feel less full.

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