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NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION OF LOVE LANGUAGES

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NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION OF LOVE LANGUAGES

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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University Honors

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ABSTRACT

Although the concept of love languages is a popular topic known by many, there is not sufficient research to support their existence in romantic relationships. There has also not been any previous studies that audibly observe the existence of love languages between romantic couples. Conducting a study examining the presence of love languages, if any, through audible recordings is significant for giving a greater extent of how individuals may express and receive love. Love language is determined by Chapman's Five Love Languages model, a model designed from a marriage counselor's experiences with helping individuals improve their relationships. Based on his personal observations when working with couples, he noted expressive language, such as words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch, as ways individuals express and receive love. In this research design, I developed and implemented a coding system to observe love languages in the everyday lives of romantic couples. The participants were 78 couples, including people who identified as being a woman in a romantic relationship with a woman, a man with a man, and different-sex couples from the Southern California community who were at least 18 years old. Couples wore an Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) used to naturalistically observe their daily social interactions through audible recordings. By developing a coding system, I expect to empirically examine Chapman's love languages, as well as explore other behaviors that should be incorporated into his original model.

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INTRODUCTION

For my Honors Capstone Project, I investigated the different types of love language styles and how they may play a role in romantic relationships. I implemented and developed a coding system that focused on how often the five different types of love language styles are practiced among couples in romantic relationships. I also discovered intriguing behaviors when listening to audio files that were outside of Gary Chapman's investigation of the types of love languages (Chapman, 1995; 2024).

Although love language expression is a well known topic, there is no sufficient research or evidence supporting Chapman's theory and if they are commonly present in romantic relationships. As a result, I investigated the different types of love languages through audible recordings. I audibly observed if any of the particular love language expressions are frequently practiced among couples, and if they played a major role in their relationship. By conducting my research proposal, I provided more empirical evidence of Chapman's love language theory to gain more revelations to support or test his ideas. My experience with developing a coding system and listening to 50 second snippets of conversations between romantic partners allowed me to understand how often love language styles occur, and be able to recognize similar behaviors that Chapman may have noted from his experiences.

To begin with, Gary Chapman proposed the Five Love Languages Model (1995; 2024) and designed it to illustrate how individuals express and receive love. According to Chapman's love languages theory, he proposed five different types of love language traits. This includes words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Words of affirmation love language includes positive praises, compliments, encouragement, and appreciation that one partner gives their significant other. An example of this being expressed is

through phrases such as, “You’re amazing” or “I love you.” Quality time is also defined as both partners having an interest in doing something together and giving each other their full attention. Quality time can include both participants participating in leisure activities together, such as eating out for dinner or engaging in meaningful conversations. For the receiving gifts love language, Chapman defines it as gifts that are given as an expression of someone’s love for their partner, and includes being physically present for their partner. An example of how this behavior can be demonstrated is through one partner gifting their significant other flowers, or a special item. Adding on, acts of service includes a partner doing something as a favor for their significant other that they know they would appreciate. This can include washing their partner’s clothes when they know they are tired or busy from having a long day at work. Lastly, physical touch involves physical expression, such as hugging, holding hands, or kissing, towards one’s significant other. This list of behaviors demonstrates how Chapman developed the Five Love Languages Model based on his personal experiences from working with couples. This model that he developed also adds to his beliefs that understanding the love languages and learning how to speak our partner’s love language is important to fill our emotional love tanks. This describes how having a “full love tank” allows couples to deal with resolving conflicts and feeling secure in their relationship (Eckstein & Morrison, 1999).

Although the theory of love languages is a popular topic, there is little empirical evidence investigating the reliability of Chapman’s observations introduced from his book. Impett et al. (2024) evaluated evidence from previous studies to examine three of the main ideas presented in Chapman’s book, including the idea that each person has a primary love language, the empirical validity of the Five Love languages Model, and that couples are more satisfied when their partners speak their preferred love language. Evaluating Chapman’s measure for discovering

one's primary love language, also known as the Love Language Personal Profile, they concluded several limitations in how individuals can uniquely select their preferred love language. For example, out of the 30 paired statements that the profile illustrates, it asks you to identify a statement that is most meaningful to you in your relationship. Most of the statements to choose from are distinguished between two different types of love languages, such as "I'm around my partner, even if we're not really doing anything," which is for quality time, and "I hold hands with my partner," testing for physical touch (Chapman, 2010). Since the profile suggests individuals to select between two statements, it does not capture their actual preferences for a particular love language. They also found that individuals value all of the five love languages, but in different contexts. For example, someone may prefer spending quality time over receiving gifts because it may be an activity they engage in occasionally as a couple. Similarly, if couples were to rate each love language, they may rate gifts as meaningful since it represents an occasional, but special way their partner communicates love. The researchers also evaluated how expressions of love languages were positively related with relationship satisfaction regardless of their preferred love language. Likewise, there are similarities between previous research about relationship maintenance behaviors with Chapman's, suggesting that his Five Love Languages Model may not be inclusive to all the ways people express and receive love (Impett et al., 2024).

In terms of why this theory is a popular topic, Impett et al. (2024) claims it enables people to identify important relationship needs, provides an intuitive metaphor that resonates with people, and offers a straightforward way to improve relationships. Similar to a healthy diet where you need all the important nutrients, they suggest that maintaining a healthy relationship works the same, in which people need multiple factors to make the relationship fulfilling. This idea can be demonstrated in long-distance relationships, in which they may lack certain factors

that can keep the relationship functioning, such as physical touch. To keep the relationship fulfilling, there may need to be a combination of multiple factors, like giving assurances or spending time together, which may explain why this creates closeness between couples. Rather than focusing on one primary love language, individuals might have to consider incorporating most of these elements to make their relationships feel fulfilling. Another reason why the topic of love languages may be a popular concept despite the empirical evidence, is because of how it can be understood easily by others. In other words, it may be easier for others to read through theories that are comprehensible and straightforward, compared to reading through scientific literature examining evidence behind couples behaviors (Impett et al., 2024).

Previous research examined Chapman's love language model and to determine if partners report greater feelings of love and relationship satisfaction when their partner used their preferred love language. Hughes and Camden (2020) found that women reported greater feelings of love compared to men when they believed their partners were using their preferred love language well enough. Although the researchers investigated Chapman's model, they stated it is important to examine this theory to find data to support or refute his theory. They also concluded that future research should include behavioral observations to see when love language acts occur and to ask partners about their perceptions. Another study conducted by Kortman and Eckstein (2004), observed how personality styles or the way people interact with each other may also play a role in how individuals choose to express their type of love language. For instance, they give four personality types using Disney's Winnie-the-Pooh animals as examples to help identify characteristic patterns. Characters that they represented with personality traits were Winnie-the-Pooh for harmony, Rabbit for production, Tigger for connection, and Eeyore for status quo. To support their representative examples, they used the Array Interaction Model to

help assist in identifying primary and secondary personal objectives in how we respond to the world or by making an analysis of our opinions of others, such as our partners. The personality description they give for someone with harmony is someone who may want to please others, or believe that relationships are critical, so they may be sensitive or giving. A production person corresponds to someone who is more logical, systematic, or organized when working towards new goals or plans. For someone with connection, they are described as being spontaneous, playful, or energetic. They also mention that partners of those with a personal objective of connection may often be disappointed because their stated concerns are made in light of fun and laughter. Lastly, the personal objective of status quo is described as someone who primarily enjoys spending time alone or being independent. The purpose of this survey was for respondents to answer questions about themselves based on how they relate to each trait or character and to analyze how they perceive their partners. This allows respondents to discuss with their partners how understanding different personality traits can be significant for themselves and others. Based on this approach, this can demonstrate how personality types and love languages may relate to each other when observing audible interactions between couples.

Similarly, there are also different viewpoints of how some of the love language traits are defined and if they are present. For example, Allen and Arney (2025) conducted a literature review where they examined the relationship between love languages and marital happiness, in which they found that love languages are not empirically valid and that there are other ways of showing love that are not one of the five love languages. They determined that love languages are not empirically valid because they concluded from the studies they gathered that there are more than five love languages, a person can have more than one preferred love language, and someone choosing to express or receive love does not have to correlate with their partner's

preferred language. In their review, they illustrated studies that concluded there are more than five love languages. Based on previous research, they gathered that having regular check-ins and being supportive of a partner's autonomy or personal goals can act as new categories for the current list of love languages, as well as other behaviors. Similarly, they investigated the idea that many people depend on the thought of love languages for relationship satisfaction between couples. They made sure to point out that there have also been high divorce rates, in which they further question whether love languages prove to maintain relationship satisfaction. In this case, they found from past research that individuals who have the same love language seem to have more marital happiness than those who do not. This is mainly due to the fact that individuals choose to stay together because of them having similar interests. Their findings indicate that love languages do not lead to marital happiness, but showing affection leads to marital happiness, which could include showing any of the types of love languages. The authors also provided information of how other researchers defined the love languages after examining the behaviors from Chapman's model. For instance, another way acts of service is defined is by adding two categories that includes the act of sacrificing for an individual for the benefit of their relationship and the act of sacrificing to make up for something or to avoid conflict (Righetti & Impett, 2017). Another viewpoint of how the gifts love language is perceived by other researchers is that there has to be thought or meaning behind the gift and that the motive behind the act of gifts is important for how it is perceived to their significant other (Bunt & Hazelwood, 2017). This shows how there are different ways the love languages are expressed and how there can be several audible interactions to keep in mind when categorizing them into a particular love language style.

Furthermore, another factor to consider when examining love language is how

individuals self-assess their own perception of love. For instance, some individuals may view the idea of being in love or being loved as meaning different things based on their personal experiences or values. This is significant because it allows partners to describe some of the different characteristics that may be operating when one feels “in love.” In this case, knowing a partner’s history involving love can help build empathy or understanding for each other by exploring different styles one may use to express love (Eckstein & Axford, 1999). It is also important to consider how couples practice good relationships, which can include good communication, trust, empathy, and understanding of their partner’s thoughts, feelings, needs, and goals (Eckstein & Cohen, 1998). This shows how it is important to keep in mind that a happy relationship involves trust and that couples may communicate what they would like to see more of from their partner. These relationship factors may also support the overall idea of how love languages are expressed according to Chapman. To have a fulfilling relationship, engaging in most of the love languages may build stronger connections between couples.

Although there may be instances where couples may not know their roles in certain problems that may arise, or are not sure on how to ask for feedback, it is important for them to communicate their needs or feelings. By providing communicative feedback, they can promote closeness and exchange (Lessin et al., 2005). This also shows how couples understanding each other opens communication for what they would like to observe more from their partner in order to feel fulfilled with their relationship (Bland & McQueen, 2018).

Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to observe the presence of love languages in romantic relationships. I used data from 78 participants who were in same-sex relationships and different-sex relationships from the Southern California community, and who were 18 years and

older. I used a type of research method, known as the Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR), which naturally observes daily social interactions through audible recordings (Mehl et al., 2001). Couples wore this device so I could observe their daily interactions by listening to recordings that captured 50 second snippets of their conversations. I also developed a coding system using previous research to define how couples audibly expressed any of the love languages. I organized these coding definitions by separating them into categories and included phrases I would hear from participants. This allowed me to assign points whenever I would hear a participant audibly demonstrating any of the five love languages to see how frequently they engaged in it.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were 78 couples recruited from the Southern California community from 2014 to 2018 (Table 1). Couples were eligible to participate if they were at least 18 years old, married or living together in a (self-identified) marriage-like relationship, had no health problems interfering with daily life, and could complete questions in English. Participants included people who identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ community and were targeted for recruitment through flyers, community events, and meetup groups to oversample same-sex couples. Fifty participants identified as a woman with a woman (WW), 38 identified as a man with a man (MM), 34 identified as a woman with a man (WM), and 34 identified as a man with a woman (MW). One MW did not have usable data due to a technical malfunction with the EAR, in which there were 155 participants in this study.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of participants

	WW		MM		WM		MW	
$N_{\text{individuals}}$	50		38		34		33	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
$N_{\text{sound files}}$	181.67	36.58	196.50	35.34	187.22	36.49	180.15	36.67
Age (years)	33.46	12.97	42.95	18.26	26.16	7.61	27.45	8.19
Relationship length (years)	7.13	7.33	11.08	11.92	6.09	5.93	5.90	6.21
Ethnicity	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Asian	2	4.00	2	5.26	5	14.71	2	6.06
Black	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	5.88	0	0.00
Latinx	11	22.00	8	21.05	12	35.29	9	27.27
Middle Eastern	2	4.00	0	0.00	1	2.94	0	0.00
White	26	52.00	20	52.63	10	29.41	11	33.33
Other/mixed	5	10.00	4	10.53	4	11.77	7	21.21
Missing	4	8.00	4	10.53	0	0.00	4	12.12

Note: Reproduced from “Re-evaluating the honing framework: Naturalistic observation of same- and different-sex couples' conversations,” by M. L. Robbins, C. M. Spahr, and A. Karan, 2024, *Personal Relationships*, 31(1), 156–174. (<https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12533>). Copyright 2024 by The Authors.

Procedure

First, I looked through the Five Love Languages model from Gary Chapman to familiarize myself with the types of love languages he initially proposed. Next, I conducted a literature review evaluating the theory of love languages and found that there was little empirical evidence on love languages, despite its popularity. To examine the presence of love languages in romantic relationships, I worked with my faculty mentor to develop and implement a coding system to observe love languages in the everyday lives of romantic couples. To develop the coding system, I had to create a document listing each love language with their acceptable definitions. Since I would be hearing the day-to-day life of romantic couples through audible

recordings and not observing their social interactions in person or through self-reports, I also had to write down ideas of how I can hear for each love expression.

From the literature review, I took notes of how researchers described each of the five different love languages, words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch based on their studies and what they found. Using the definitions Chapman listed for each of the five love languages, I also noted observable traits researchers found when examining the way individuals express or receive love. For words of affirmation, I first defined it as the act of regularly communicating affection with a partner, such as verbally giving compliments, encouragement, kindness, and making requests rather than making demands. Observable ideas for hearing this type of behavior were hearing how a participant's tone of voice sounded when they expressed their appreciation. I would have to look for clues of what participants may demonstrate when coding, such as them using softer tones for giving or receiving compliments, compared to uninterested or louder tones, which goes against the positive intentions behind the idea of love languages (Impett et al., 2024). Other examples of how this language type would sound like were hearing compliments, such as partners praising how their significant other dressed, or couples mentioning their appreciation for each other. Since words of affirmation are expressed through speaking, coding for this particular love language would be easier to code, especially for compliments, appreciation, and encouragement, since EAR data is done through 50-second audio recordings. This suggested that coding for the other love languages required hearing for more evidence that implied couples were demonstrating behaviors other than words of affirmation.

Additionally, I defined quality time as the act of participating in mutually enjoyable or quality conversations, where both partners are not engaged in another activity. Observing this

particular behavior through EAR was paying attention to how long couples spent on a conversation about a certain topic. By hearing how long they engaged in a topic and concluding that they were giving each other insights or their focused attention on their conversation, this would be coded as quality time. Topics including serious conversations were also considered as quality time, since they could provide each other with more further insights about their relationship (Hughes & Camden, 2020). Hearing conversations where they organized events to spend time together or talking about a hangout idea would also be considered as hearing for quality time. Likewise, hearing them share their experiences after going out together, also predicted they spent quality time. When developing the coding system for quality time, we also had to assume certain factors. We had to assume couples were engaging in a hobby together, and having to hear for evidence that none of them were distracted or engaged in a separate activity from their partners. Since we are listening to 50 second snippets, we initially believed the detailed or longer conversations between couples would not be as applicable because it would not be able to capture a whole conversation.

In terms of coding for giving or receiving gifts, I defined it as the act of an individual showing their symbol of love to someone. This includes being physically present for their partner during a time of crisis, gifting them with something purchased, found, or made that has thought or meaning behind it (Eckstein & Morrison, 1999). Examples of how this behavior may be demonstrated through audible recordings were hearing if a partner thanked their significant other for gifting them something. We would have to carefully listen to keywords, such as “You’re so thoughtful” to imply that someone received a gift from their partner. We could have also heard the tone one partner had from the recordings. For example, we would have to hear if their voice sounded surprised or enthusiastic for having received something from their partner. Likewise,

listening to the possible meaning behind the item that was gifted or their partner's intentions behind the item would give further insights of it being gifts love language. We also had a similar belief that this love language might not occur, but we decided to still include it in case there was a chance of it being heard in the coding system. In this case, we would have needed more context for receiving gifts when listening to audio files, including hearing a participant mention a gift or hearing them mentioning that they received a gift from their partner.

For acts of service, I first defined it as the act of doing something, such as a household chore, with positive thought, energy, and planning that an individual knows their partner would appreciate (Hughes & Camden, 2020). This behavior would have been heard if one person helps perform a particular task for their significant other. This would consist of listening to one partner perhaps saying, "thank you," in which we can conclude that they helped them with doing something. Another way I thought of hearing about this particular love language was if they mentioned doing favors for their partner. This could have sounded like one partner planning to assist their partner with a task or chore and hearing for keywords that expressed their partner's gratitude for something they did.

I initially defined physical touch as the act of an individual physically communicating their love through touch, which can include kissing, hugging, or sexual acts (Eckstein & Morrison, 1999). I believed hearing this love language in EAR sound files would refer to how couples started or ended their greetings to each other. For example, if they had spent some time away from each other, such as them both heading to work, we could possibly detect a brief pause or listen for a sound that could conclude they gave each other a hug or kiss. This same interaction can be audibly observed with partners greeting each other again by coming together after a while apart. Hearing this love language can also sound direct if one partner mentions that

they touched their significant other. One partner may mention their partner's arms feeling warm, in which we could conclude they engaged in physical touch. However, we believed that affectionate behavior or physical touch would be harder to code because it had no audible component, and especially since we cannot visually observe this behavior in-person. Still, we decided to include this detail in the coding definition.

After I formed brief descriptions of each of the five love languages and how they can be audibly observed in sound files, I met with my mentor to revise the coding definitions in a spreadsheet (Table 2). The definitions I had created for each of the love languages were refined and split into separate categories to give brief explanations of what each love language entails. This would allow for the coding experience to be more manageable between research assistants having to code for certain behaviors. We also thought it was important to note that for quality time, we would be hearing for other evidence to determine they are spending time together. In other words, we would be hearing background noises that suggest they are spending quality time, and not one of them taking a phone call or sound distracted. For acts of service, we also thought it would be significant to note that it can be a thoughtful act if someone helps their partner or is done to do a usual chore.

Table 2

Couples' Study Coding Definitions

Category	Name	Description
Words of Affirmation	Compliments	1 = P positively praises their sig. other's work, appearance, qualities, skills, etc. (ex: "You look beautiful/handsome today," "You look great," "You're special," "I'm proud of you")
	Appreciation	1 = P is showing gratitude for their sig. other (ex: "Thank you for being there for me," "I appreciate what you do," "I love you," "I'm grateful for you") (softer tones for giving/receiving a compliment vs. louder tones)

	Encouragement	1 = P is encouraging; persuades sig. other to do or continue something (ex: "Go after the job you are thinking of," "You got this," "You're capable of achieving anything," "Take your time," "I'm here for you")
Quality Time	Engagement	1 = P is engaging in a fun activity with sig. other (ex: watching a movie, doing a DIY project, playing video games/board games, running errands together); may have quality conversations (ex: "How was work?," "How was your day?")
	Planning	1 = P is organizing events or plans to spend time together (ex: "Let's go out for dinner," "Let's plan a day out," "Let's go to the movies")
	Taking part in	1 = P is asking or suggesting their sig. other to accompany/join them somewhere (ex: "Let's go grocery shopping together," "I'm going grocery shopping, do you want to come with me?")
Receiving Gifts	Mentions of gifts	1 = P mentions giving a sentimental/meaningful gift (ex: "I was thinking about you when I saw this," "I thought you might like this candle," "I know you've wanted this for a while") 1 = P mentions receiving a gift (ex: "You're so thoughtful," "The flowers are beautiful!")
	Context	1 = P surprises their sig. other with a gift (ex: random occasion ["I brought some of your favorite food for dinner"] vs. expected occasion ["Anniversaries/Birthdays; "I brought you a cake and something special"])
Acts of Service	Favors	1 = P does something they think their sig. other would do (ex: "I made your lunch before you head for work," "I helped run your errands when you were busy," "I filled the gas tank for you," "I picked up the packages so you didn't have to") 1 = P does something they know their sig. other wants to do (ex: "I cleaned the house before you came home from work so we can relax/spend time together," "I made you breakfast in bed," "I helped finish the project you've been working on," "I booked a reservation for your favorite restaurant," "I made tea for your sore throat")
Physical Touch	Affectionate	1 = P mentions their sig. other's touch (ex: "Your skin feel so soft," "Your arms are warm")
	Communication	1 = P may ask for a hug, kiss, to hold hands, etc. (ex: "Can I get a quick kiss before you leave?," "Can we cuddle?")

Once we had constructed the format of the coding definitions and how they would appear in the EAR coding system, I had the opportunity to recruit research assistants. I conducted

interviews with my faculty mentor to find research assistants that could help me code for the presence of love languages. There were an additional five research assistants that assisted me with this project by being a part of the data collection. They offered insights into certain behaviors that they have noted from listening to a couple of participants during the start of the training period. We had weekly meetings with coders to discuss behaviors we heard from some of the audio files. During the training period, all research assistants, and I were given the same set of couples to work with in order to discuss behaviors we noticed from listening to the same audio files. This allowed us to gain understanding of the coding definitions and talk amongst each other to get further insights of how each of us interpreted the coding definitions. Ultimately, this gave us a broader understanding of how we felt influenced to code for certain behaviors and not for others.

From our discussions, I used the feedback from our meetings to include clarifying terms for most of the love languages (Table 3). For words of affirmation, it was initially unclear what was considered as a compliment and what was encouragement. As a result, we worked as a team to figure out specific behaviors that we noticed could be differentiated. For example, we figured out together that compliments were gestures that occurred in the presence of it happening, such as one partner complimenting how their significant other dressed or saying, “I love you.” On the other hand, encouragements were gestures that were more future-oriented or something that is not already done, such as one partner telling the other, “sounds great, love it” to a specific dinner plan. We communicated with each other that acts of service were confusing to code for at first because we had to think about a particular participant doing the act, not coding for their significant other demonstrating this behavior. In a similar way, we looked over the coding definitions again, and included more details of how acts of service can be coded. Initially, acts of

service were described as one participant doing an act for their partner, but after we noticed offers of service from the training period, we decided to revise its description. The revised description of acts of service in our coding system includes the participant doing something they think their partner would have done, them doing something they know their significant other wants done, and can include a welcome offer of service, even if it was declined. The reason for including the offers of service, even if they were declined is because the intention behind the behavior was still there. Table 3 outlines the five love languages and their coding definitions throughout the data collection process, ensuring all coders knew which category certain behaviors applied to.

Table 3

Couples' Study Finalized Coding Definitions

Category	Name	Description
Words of Affirmation	Compliments	1 = P positively praises their sig. other's work, appearance, qualities, skills, etc. (ex: "You look beautiful/handsome today," "You look great," "You're special," "I'm proud of you")
	Gratitude/Appreciation	1 = P is showing gratitude for their sig. other (ex: "Thank you for being there for me," "I appreciate what you do," "I love you," "I'm grateful for you")
	Encouragement	1 = P is encouraging of the sig. other's goal(s), or to do or continue something (ex: "Go after the job you are thinking of," "You got this," "You're capable of achieving anything," "Take your time," "I'm here for you" [in the context of the sig. other trying to achieve a goal])
Quality Time	Engagement in Quality Time Activities	1 = P is engaging in a leisure activity with sig. other (ex: watching a movie, doing a DIY project, playing video games/board games, running errands together)
	Planning Quality Time Activities	1 = P is organizing events or plans to spend time together (ex: "Let's go out for dinner," "Let's plan a day out," "Let's go to the movies," "Let's go shopping together.")

	Substantive or personal conversation	1 = P is in a conversation that has the purpose to exchange thoughts, information, values, ideas; it could be about news of the day, about political issues, philosophical topics, theoretical ideas, debates; information only. Does not have to be "deep." OR P is sharing own personal feelings or emotions. Can include talking about their or a parent's divorce and their hopes and dreams for the future. Not trivial. (e.g., "I feel so shitty." "I am scared about my final grade." "I have a crush on someone.").
Receiving Gifts	Mentions of gifts	1 = P mentions giving or receiving a sentimental/meaningful gift (ex: "I was thinking about you when I saw this," "I thought you might like this candle," "I know you've wanted this for a while," "You're so thoughtful," "The flowers are beautiful!")
Acts of Service	Favors	1 = P does something they think their sig. other would do (ex: "I made your lunch before you head for work," "I helped run your errands when you were busy," "I filled the gas tank for you," "I picked up the packages so you didn't have to") 1 = P does something they know their sig. other wants to do (ex: "I cleaned the house before you came home from work so we can relax/spend time together," "I made you breakfast in bed," "I helped finish the project you've been working on," "I booked a reservation for your favorite restaurant," "I made tea for your sore throat")
Physical Touch	Affectionate	1 = P mentions their sig. other's touch (ex: "Your skin feel so soft," "Your arms are warm") or you can hear a kiss or other physical affection
	Communication	1 = P may ask for a hug, kiss, to hold hands, etc. (ex: "Can I get a quick kiss before you leave?," "Can we cuddle?")

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I have found that certain love languages were present in most of the audio files I have coded. I have also found interesting ideas from the other research assistants that there have been behaviors they observed that were not considered a love language, but believed they could be.

Based on my observations with listening to audio recordings and coding for behaviors, I found myself coding for a variety of love languages, but often found myself coding for quality time. In the coding system, quality time was described as having two separate categories, including couples planning or engaging in leisure activities together, and having substantive or

personal conversations. I believe that quality time occurred more often when I was coding for the love languages because most of the couples suggested plans to go to the movies, attended social gatherings together, or had conversations that allowed them to exchange ideas and further develop their thoughts with each other. Finding that quality time as the love language type that occurs more often from my experience with coding, makes me believe that these behaviors are to be expected, especially for romantic relationships. Listening to couples talk about how they feel about particular things, and hearing them watch TV shows or movies together to have conversations of what they watched, made sense to me because without these interactions, there would most likely be no relationship (Impett et al., 2024).

Although I found myself coding for quality time often, I did notice the other love languages occurred regularly. I believe this was an important idea to consider, especially since Chapman claimed that everyone has a primary love language. By speaking our partner's love language, Chapman claimed couples can build a greater connection and identify the root of their conflicts (Chapman, 1995; 2024). In this case, the study by Impett et al. (2024) relates to the idea of coding for a variety of love languages because it shows how combining most of these factors can build a closer bond. Instead of focusing on one particular love language a significant other might like, incorporating most of them can make the relationship feel more fulfilling. If there is a particular instance where one partner may want to see more from their significant other, they can communicate or build trust to understand their thoughts, needs, or goals (Eckstein & Cohen, 1998).

Adding on, the conclusions Allen and Arney (2025) gathered from their literature review about there being more than five love languages can be supported. They found that new categories that can be incorporated into the model were having regular check-ins and showing

support for a partner's goals. Based on my experiences with coding, I also believe that there should be more instances or interactions that should be added into the five love languages model. There should be more categories added to the love language types, such as words of affirmation having more components, other than compliments, encouragement, and appreciation. From what I have noticed from listening to audio files, there were instances where one partner demonstrates empathy for their significant other, or mentions them wanting to care or comfort them, especially when their partner was expressing feelings of pain or sadness. For instance, coders have observed a couple where one partner tells their significant other "I'm sorry" immediately after they stated something they did that upset them. Learning about this interaction was intriguing to know about because it provides further insights into it, possibly fitting into a new category for words of affirmation just like how "thank you" fits under gratitude.

Based on what I have heard from coding and from other coders, there seemed to be common instances where couples would joke or tease around with each other. Although this can probably be a form of quality time, we believed this can be added as its own love language. Likewise, we would also find couples referring to each other using a term of endearment, or with nicknames to show their affection towards each other. Examples of terms of endearment I have heard included partners referring to each other as "baby," "toot a loo loo," or "sweetheart." Terms of endearment are not described as being part of words of affirmation, or in any of the five love languages according to Chapman, but we believe that it can be a form of affirmation, especially since it has a positive meaning behind the way a partner refers to their significant other.

What I found interesting from what other coders have heard was a participant's willingness to learn their partner's native language. I found this particular instance interesting

because from the coding system, this behavior would not necessarily describe acts of service, since acts of service are done through offers or acts that their partner would want or would like to be done. In this instance, the participant wanting to learn about their significant partner's native language was out of their own determination to get to know their partner.

CONCLUSION

Throughout my time completing this capstone project, I learned the importance of working collaboratively with others to produce a research project. By working with a research team, I was able to hear from other coders and hear about what they have noticed on the coding from the couples they were assigned with. Hearing from their ideas and listening to their questions as they arose in the beginning of developing the coding system, I was able to use their observations to redefine how the coding definitions should be worded and what we can expect for each coding definition. Similarly, having our discussions made me realize the importance of recollecting with each other on what we have noticed from coding audio files. I realized that through the questions being raised during our discussions, we were able to build on new research ideas and describe certain behaviors that may not have been part of the coding system or love language model, but could be included. In conclusion, working on this project gave me a greater understanding of what pursuing research is like. From brainstorming topic ideas with my faculty mentor, investigating previous research, drafting coding definitions, and having discussions with other coders, I gained valuable experiences in conducting this research project.

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