# Critical Analysis Love from a Sociologist Perspective

## Essay Question – Love.

Love in a general sense, can be defined as “an intense feeling of deep affection” (Oxford Dictionary). There are several sub-types of love including “brotherly love, care for another human, unconditional love, erotic love, self-love, and love of God' (Fromm, 1956). Love can be interpreted and expressed in different ways, depending on the type of relationship. For example, the way you love your partner would be different to the way you love your child or a friend.

Although love was once seen as an extremely personal issue, in contemporary times, it has been recognised as actually being a ‘social’ issue. Sociologist Sigmund Freud defined romantic love as to “form living substance into ever greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development” (Freud cited in Marcuse, 1955). To analyse the broad spectrum of ‘love’ and its’ many different sub-categories further, romantic love will be used as an example. Romantic love can also be defined as the desire for emotional connection with another individual (Fisher, 1992). Romantic love often involves “passion, intimacy and commitment” (Robert Sternberg, 1986).

To critically analyse love from a sociologist perspective, William J. Goode’s theory on love, has pointed out, love also has structural importance, as it is associated with marriage in modern western cultures. Romantic love is a factor that has an impact on the social structure, social stratification and the structural reproduction of society (William J Goode, 1959).

Social structure plays a crucial role in a well-functioning society. It means “The fundamental and relatively enduring framework of social institutions, roles, statuses, and norms constituting the interrelated elements of society at a particular time” (Oxford Dictionary). As Goode’s pointed out, romantic love impacts the “overall social structure and functionality of society...”, as it can determine the way a society progresses and addresses social issues.

A second key concept as Goode’s addressed includes social stratification, which means “the allocation of individuals and groups according to various social hierarchies of differing power, status, or prestige” (Oxford Dictionary, 2011). When relating this to Goode's theory of love, it can mean that there is inequality between genders, dependent on socio-economic status and reproductive factors. Barbara Smuts (1992), states “males use aggression to control female sexuality to males’ reproductive advantage”.

Goodes also discovered that romantic love can impact social reproduction overall. Although the structural reproduction of society was first developed by Karl Marx, in his concept Marxist Feminism, it was defined by Christopher Doob. Doob's states that it 'refers to the emphasis on the structures and activities that transmit social inequality from one generation to the next” (Christopher B Doob, 2003). Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, states that there are four capital which relate to structural reproduction. These include financial capital, cultural capital, human capital, and social capital. Structural reproduction can be affected by ‘love’ and can have a lasting impact on a functioning society.

Empirical evidence of how romantic ‘love’ can be seen as a social issue, to support Goode's theoretical perspective, would include a marital domestic relationship; whereby domestic violence is occurring. Goode states that physical force is similar to resources, which may be used to achieve a certain outcome or to persuade unwanted actions. (Goodes,1971).

As mentioned above, romantic love can sometimes lead to situations of Domestic Violence. Laws vary from country to country with issues surrounding Domestic Violence. When looking at the Australian State New South Wales for example, a law exists to protect individuals enduring domestic violence, by making it a crime with varying degrees of punishment for offenders. There is also protection orders called Apprehended Violence Orders, which restricts certain behaviours from an individual in such domestic situations (Crimes Domestic and Personal Violence Act, 2007). Domestic Violence is view as “a crime committed against the state', rather than the individual alone whom was subject to such a crime.

To elaborate further, Social Services also exist across Australia, to assist those escaping domestic violence. These services may include refuges, psychological support and in some cases monetary support as well. These services exist as they aim to provide support for those who are experiencing domestic violence by their current or former partner. If love wasn’t deemed as a social issue, these services would not have a need to exist or operate. We have needed to shift from the mentality of “what happens behind closed doors, stays behind closed doors' to the mentality of “when violence occurs in an intimate romantic relationship behind closed doors, it is everyone’s business in society'.

The alarming statistics between a romantic relationship and associated Domestic Violence in Australia is staggering. Statistics suggest that on average one female each week is murdered by her current or former partner (AIoC, 2017), and a further 1 in 6 women and 1 in 16 men have experienced domestic or sexual violence from a current or previous cohabiting partner (AIHW, 2019) . This equates to Australian Police dealing with a Domestic Violence situation every two minutes (ABS, 2016). This form of what was once romantic ‘love’ turned Domestic Violence, also has profound impacts to wider society. It is estimated that violence against women costs the Australian economy approximately $22 billion dollars per year (KPMG, 2016).

The example given above coincides with sociologist William J Goode's theoretical perspective on how love is in fact a social issue. In particular, romantic love, Goode's highlights the importance that love is in fact a social issue, due to the following reasons. “Love impacts social structure, social stratification and the structural reproduction of society” (Goodes, 1971). From a romantic love point of view, these three key points are of high importance when relating it to the cycle of intimate love and the potential impacts it may have on society. Domestic Violence for example, impacts every aspect of society, whether it be economically, psychologically, legally or medically. It also can determine the way a society progresses for the better, in the future.

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