Sociology of Love: Analysis on the Base of Study Conducted by Gabb and Fink

In my essay, I am going to discuss the sociology of love using the study conducted by Gabb and Fink, in which they use multiple research methods of relationships behaviours and personal lives. They are a continuous obligation which relies on steady maintenance, nurturing and assurances from each participant.

Sociology is the scientific study of societies. It is concerned in the broadest sense with the study of human society. Human society involves various dimensions of social relationships, social interaction and culture. As a social science, sociology uses various forms of observations and experiments in critical analysis to develop knowledge about social order, acceptance of diverse societies and social change.

It is a common thing in sociology for people to have different views and approach towards societal issues. Hence, there are three main approaches or perspectives in studying sociology which is functionalist, conflict and interactionists perspectives. The functionalist's focus emphasizes the way that part of a society is structured to maintain its stability (Schaefer and Lamm, 1998). The functionalist's view is that every social aspect of society contributes to society's survival. The conflict perspective sees social life as a competition and focuses on the distribution of resources, power and inequality. The interactionists derive social processes from human interactions. It focuses on how people shape society and are also shaped by society through meaning that arises in interactions.

This is as a result of the fact that the sense of validation, love and community relationship that exists between friends, colleagues and family are decreasing; as people's work is more precarious and they relocate a lot to various societies.

In a sociological context, we need to view love in various institutions to verify whether there can be the sociology of love. Gabb and Fink article on Telling moments and everyday experience: multiple method research on couple relationships and personal lives, will be examined for any possibility for the sociology of love. Since couples and family make up the core units that society thrives and expands, I suppose that Gabb and Fink decided to focus more on the relationship that occurs between couples. And most notably of Gabb and Finks' article is the emphasis of everyday experiences. They noted that according to Stewart (2007:9), everyday life is the life lived on the level of surging effects, impacts suffered or barely avoided. It takes everything we have. But it also spawns a series of somethings dreamed up in the course of the things. In view of this definition, Gabb and Fink focused on how everyday experiences in long term relationships could make and remake couple intimacies in dynamic and emotionally charged configurations.

Gabb and Fink in their own words - 'used multiple methods, multi-sensory research design to access accounts of vibrant and visceral relationships, foregrounding every day and focusing on ordinary moments as a lens through which to examine relationship process, practice and structure' - as their approach to attain their focus. Gabb and Fink began by situating their research on a practice approach - The Enduring Love?, which has been so influential in UK

family sociology and rich tradition of creativity. Enduring Love? the project saw a quantitative survey designed, which was completed online by 5445 people, to generate statistical information on relationship qualities, relationship with partners and relationship maintenance to scope the trends in behaviour and the factors that signal relationship satisfaction. Gabb and Fink completed their analysis by simultaneously taking account of the epistemological and methodological issues that are at play when multiple methods are brought together. Participants were asked to tell what they liked and disliked about their relationship and what their partner did that made them feel appreciated through free text open questions. More than 10000 responses were generated with answers ranging from several words to lengthy descriptions.

Gabb and Fink were able to analyse these responses and submitted that The Enduring Love? Study implies that the ‘success’ of a relationship for the participants was not dependent on money, the external validation afforded through socio-cultural external markers such as extravagant bouquets of flowers profess to display love or the approbation of extended kin. It was intimate couple knowledge, and its manifestation through everyday acts, that counted. Furthermore, the survey indicated that domestic roles and responsibilities were based on a sense of commitment and togetherness. In addition, relationship practices and relationship generosity were meaningful because they demonstrated how both the relationship and the other partner were cherished. Acknowledgement and valuing of the everyday practices and emotions that goes into sustaining relationships over time were also noted. As a result, Gabb and Fink submit that the success responses ensured their sensitivity and attentiveness to the momentary as a defining quality of relationship practices.

Sociological perspectives explain love relationships as not excellent but a working improvement. A responsibility which banks on continuous maintenance and reassurance. Love relationship practices and investments are configured in experiences that will be shared in the past, present and in the future.

Love can represent so many different meanings and understandings: sexual love, intimate love, companionate love, romantic love, parental love, friendship love, interspecies love, love for places, belongings, views. It is a word that is used prolifically to mean so much, which means it is incredibly difficult to define and study.

Sociologists’ understandings of love tend to reflect different understandings of it within society, simply because the way we can study love is through talking to people, investigating cultural representations and understanding the structuring and organising principles of love; these will inevitably reflect general societal understandings of love.

Perhaps what produces divergence from societal understandings is the way in which we interpret and analyse these findings. For example, while it may be common knowledge that couples often marry for love, as sociologists, we know that this is a fairly recent development in Western societies that implies changes in wider societal structures and social forces.

Alternatively, relationships and love still appear to be very important to people and so other sociologists suggest a continuity in the ideal of long-term or even life-long love. Love has simply become riskier.

According to the functionalist perspective, also called functionalism, each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's functioning as a whole. The government, or state,

provides education for the children of the family, which in turn pays taxes on which the state depends to keep itself running. That is, the family is dependent upon the school to help children grow up to have good jobs so that they can raise and support their own families. In the process, the children become law?abiding, tax-paying citizens, who in turn support the state. If all goes well, the parts of society produce order, stability, and productivity. If all does not go well, the parts of society then must adapt to recapture a new order, stability, and productivity. For example, during a financial recession with its high rates of unemployment and inflation, social programs are trimmed or cut. Schools offer fewer programs. Families tighten their budgets. And a new social order, stability, and productivity occur. Functionalist believe society consists of a stable system of interrelated parts of individuals, institutions and structures. These structures serve social functions that contribute and work together to promote social stability and a unified whole.

The functionalist perspective continues to try and explain how societies maintained the stability and internal cohesion necessary to ensure their continued existence over time. In the functionalist perspective, societies are thought to function like organisms, with various social institutions working together like organs to maintain and reproduce them. The various parts of society are assumed to work together naturally and automatically to maintain overall social equilibrium. Because social institutions are functionally integrated to form a stable system, a change in one institution will precipitate a change in other institutions. Dysfunctional institutions, which do not contribute to the overall maintenance of society, will cease to exist.

According to the conflict perspective, society is made up of individuals competing for limited resources (e.g., money, leisure, partners, etc.). Competition over scarce resources is at the heart of all social relationships. Competition, rather than consensus, is characteristic of human relationships. Broader social structures and organizations (e.g., religions, government, etc.) reflect the competition for resources and the inherent inequality competition entails; some people and organizations have more resources (i.e., power and influence), and use those resources to maintain their positions of power in society. Some forms of conflict theory look at the struggles for control of scarce and desired resources (money, prestige, land, etc.) which are extremely important for understanding what goes on.

Interactionist perspective, also known as symbolic interactionism, directs sociologists to consider the symbols and details of everyday life, what these symbols mean, and how people interact with each other. Although symbolic interactionism traces its origins to Max Weber's assertion that individuals act according to their interpretation of the meaning of their world, the American philosopher George H. Mead (1863–1931) introduced this perspective to American sociology in the 1920s.

According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, people attach meanings to symbols, and then they act according to their subjective interpretation of these symbols. Verbal conversations, in which spoken words serve as the predominant symbols, make this subjective interpretation especially evident. The words have a certain meaning for the “sender,” and, during effective communication, they hopefully have the same meaning for the “receiver.” In other terms, words are not static “things”; they require intention and interpretation. The conversation is an interaction of symbols between individuals who constantly interpret the world around them. Of course, anything can serve as a symbol as long as it refers to something beyond itself. Written music serves as an example. The black dots and lines become more than mere marks on the page; they refer to notes organized in such a way as to make musical sense. Thus, symbolic

interactionists give serious thought to how people act, and then seek to determine what meanings individuals assign to their own actions and symbols, as well as to those of others.

Sociologists agree that institutions arise and persist because of a definite felt need of the members of the society. While there is essential agreement on the general origin of institutions, sociologists have differed about the specific motivating factors. Sumner and Keller maintained that institutions come into existence to satisfy vital interests of man. Ward believed that they arise because of social demand or social necessity. Lewis H Morgan ascribed the basis of every institution to what he called a perpetual want.