

**Love: A Frame Analysis. Exploring the Organisation
of Emotion**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Sociology has made three claims about why love matters: firstly, it matters to individuals and shapes their personal lives, influences the decisions they make and the actions they take; secondly, it creates networks of belonging and forges communities; and thirdly it is the proper foundation of human society and social solidarity. This latter claim proposes that love has a moral dimension because it is unconditionally and universally concerned with the well-being of the other. There is little empirical work to support these claims, however, and the project upon which this thesis is based seeks to begin addressing this gap. It is also argued that the nature of modern life undermines love's moral potential because it undermines the unconditional and universal concern for the other. Instead it is claimed that love in modern society is underpinned by the notion of choice and particularity such that modern love is conditional and exclusive. Modern love, then, it is argued, lacks a moral dimension.

Using Goffman's concept of 'frame' as the theoretical foundation of the work, this research seeks to understand the shared ways in which individuals 'know' love, 'do' love and 'recognise' love so that it exists as a meaningful social concept. Using data generated through interviews, focus-group discussions and qualitative questionnaires, the claims within the literature have been interrogated. The findings suggest that love does shape the personal lives of individuals and creates networks of belonging. It also supports the argument that love in modern society is conditional and exclusive, underpinned by the concept of 'choice'. It does not, however, support the argument that love lacks a moral dimension because of this. Rather, conditional and exclusive love is a means of bestowing extraordinary value to others and this is a moral action.

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Introduction

Why and how is the topic of 'love' relevant to sociology? The sociological literature on love proposes ways that an understanding of love matters to the discipline by making claims about the relationship between individuals, society and love. Three general claims predominate within the literature and the answers to these questions appear to guide the various foci of interests of different authors. The first of these three claims is that love is a central feature of modern life because much of an individual's personal life is organised around their different love relationships (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1992). Love relationships occupy our time and impact on our motivations; many of our actions towards others are organised according to what a person means to us and love relationships occupy the pinnacle position in our personal lives. Understanding love relationships, then, is an important task of sociology if we are to understand individual social action and decision making within both personal and public spaces.

Secondly, all individuals exist and operate from within a network of relationships and, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), the most significant of these is our love relationships. This is because they give us a sense of belonging in the world and construct a feeling of stability in our lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992). Because society has undergone significant transformation, a sense of stability and unity amongst persons is no longer generated automatically by pre-existing community bonds; instead individuals are responsible for constructing and maintaining their own bonds and generating their own sense of social cohesiveness with those around them. 'For individuals who

have to invent or find their own social setting, love becomes the central pivot giving meaning to their lives' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 170). Love relationships have, increasingly, become elective and conditional, however, so that individuals can achieve these objectives in ways that suit them (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992). In seeking to understand social stability and cohesion sociology must, therefore, have a working conceptualisation of love in order to understand the social networks within which small and larger scale communities are formed and maintained.

Finally, it has been argued by some theorists that understanding love is the key to understanding social solidarity and the morality of a society (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995[1956]). This theorising centres upon the inherent moral goodness of the Judeo-Christian command to 'love your neighbour as yourself', and proposes this precept as foundational to the creation and maintenance of unity between all people *qua* people (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Weber, 1991[1915]; Scheler, 1972). It is argued within these writings, that in order to understand the degree to which a society is moral we must first understand the degree to which social conceptualisations of love are congruent with 'loving one's neighbour'. It is sociology's task to explore these congruencies.

Despite these claims demonstrating an imperative for a 'sociology of love', at the outset of the project there was no coherent sub-discipline that treated love as its primary domain of interest. Neither was there much work that had collected and collated the various sociological writings on the emotion and presented it as a body of work on the singular topic of love. This project began that task. Moreover, much of the literature about love lacked empirical confirmation, and the claims about how relevant the topic of love is to sociology appeared to be based on social

observation rather than empirical data. My research therefore sought to generate data about love that could be used to 'test' sociological theorising and contribute to discussions about the connections between love and society. The primary focus of investigation was on how individuals understood and interpreted their own feelings as being 'love', how they demonstrated love to others, and how they 'recognised' love in the actions of others. With this in mind the research questions were as follows:

1. How do we know that what we are feeling is love?
2. How do we display feelings of love to others?
3. What is it in the 'displays' of others that we recognise as being love?

The research was interested in understanding the answers to these questions that are *shared* by members of a society as a way of identifying shared understandings of what love is and how it 'ought' to be done.

Having generated empirical data using these questions, the findings of this research support, to some degree, all three of the claims outlined above. Firstly, the data shows that love relationships matter within personal lives; feelings and behaviours of love impact on everyday life through the management of time, space and resources and love relationships are central to a person's sense of identity (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991). Secondly, the research findings propose that individuals use their love relationships to construct and maintain social bonds and create 'networks' of 'connections' that give us a sense of belonging in the world (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995); choice does underpin this construction and maintenance and therefore there is a conditional element to love in modern society (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Giddens, 1992).

The third claim that is made with regards to love in society is the proposal that there is a strong connection between love and morality; this is a complex claim because it is multidimensional. It is argued within this part of the sociological literature, that love *has* a moral potential but that this potential remains unfulfilled due to the organisation of society and the value system of capitalism. The moral potential of love is its ability to bestow value and respond to the needs of others, because the character of love is that it has an attitude of unconditional care for those it meets. This combination of attitude and action has been summed up and expressed through the Judeo-Christian command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Bauman, 2003; 2000; 1990; Fromm, 1995). Through the enactment of this unconditional care for another's well-being – by loving one's neighbour – social bonds are generated and maintained and social solidarity and unity amongst people is created and sustained (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973).

The deciding factor with regards to the fulfilment of this potential is the degree to which individuals universally and unconditionally accept and act upon the obligation to 'love their neighbour'. The analysis of modern society by authors who theorise love in this way is that people do not universally and unconditionally accept the obligation to love their neighbour, and thus society is significantly less moral than it could and ought to be (Bauman, 2003; 2000; 1990; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973).

It is this latter claim that my research findings struggle to support wholly. In agreement with the literature it is argued that modern love does not involve the universal and unconditional fulfilment of obligations to others. This is because there are some love relationships that are based on the act of choosing and what can be chosen can also be 'unchosen'; some love relationships are therefore

conditional. Moreover, with the exception of relationships of circumstance (such as family relationships), within the research findings decisions about whether to engage in love at all were also considered choices. Loving, then, was not considered an action directed towards 'others' universally, but an action that need only be directed towards particular others that were chosen or 'given' circumstantially. Nonetheless, it is argued in this thesis that there *are* obligations associated with love and that these obligations are moral because fulfilling them (or not) bestows (or fails to bestow) value on others. Likewise, the research findings also suggest that an important part of loving another person is responding to their needs in a meaningful way out of a sense of responsibility for their wellbeing. The research findings cannot, then, support the claim that modern love lacks a moral dimension.

It is acknowledged, however, that the morality associated with modern loving is not a 'universal' morality that cares for all people, but an 'elective' morality that cares for a few *chosen* people. On this basis it is argued that when seeking to analyse what generates and maintains wider scale social bonds the phenomenon of 'love' is probably not the best place to look. Although the command to 'love your neighbour' and social ideas about love appear to be talking about the same emotion they are in fact describing different phenomena: the love associated with 'loving one's neighbour', for example, can more accurately be described as feelings and actions of 'compassion' and 'mercy' for proximal others, regardless of whether we know them or not. This is different to modern conceptions of love, which is considered a feeling that is directed towards known persons on the basis of the knowledge one has about them. Modern love involves a positive regard for what is known about others and it is this feeling that prompts

us to care for them. Both contain obligations of care, but the fulfilment of these obligations looks different.

The thesis concludes by arguing that instead of love then, sociological discussions of morality – and its connection with the creation and maintenance of social bonds and solidarity – could benefit from further exploration of the moral potentials contained within Goffman's (1972; 1974) concepts of the 'interaction order' and 'frames'. Instead of looking at how one treats loved ones within a 'love frame', it may be beneficial to examine how we treat strangers within a 'compassion frame'.

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The following part of this introductory chapter explains the theoretical context of the work by providing an overview of the 'sociology of emotions' and looking at typologies that social theorists have used to organise the literature on emotions – primarily concerning whether they are biological or social phenomena (Williams, 2001; Lupton, 1998). As an alternative to these typologies Turner and Stets (2006) articulate five theoretical approaches to emotion which are also outlined here. Aligning itself with none of these approaches in their entirety, however, this project proposes that using Goffman's (1974) concepts of frame, alongside his writing on the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1967), aspects of each approach can be used to construct a theoretical framework that: acknowledges the 'dramatic' aspect of emotions (in this case, love) through the enactment of culturally agreed-upon, normative emotional narratives (Hochschild, 2003a); recognises that individuals are active in interpreting their own and other's bodies when engaging with emotions (Shott, 1979); and supports the ideas that ritualised action (Collins, 2004) and deferential behaviours create and sustains social

solidarity, through the construction and maintenance of social ties. The chapter then provides an overview of the structure of the thesis, alongside summarising relevant literature used within the project.

The Sociology of Emotions

It is only relatively recently that emotions became a legitimate area of sociological enquiry (Thoits, 1989). Thoits (1989: 317) argues that the increasing sociological interest in emotions has come about because of a

‘recognition that humans are not motivated solely by rational-economic concerns. Emotional attachments to others and affective commitments (e.g. desires, attitudes, values, moral beliefs) influence a significant portion of human behavior’.

Thoits (1989: 319) also argues that ‘what is important to sociologists about emotions ... [is] their social antecedents and their social acquisition and/or shaping’. Emotions, within sociology then, are largely seen as being created and/or maintained by a society’s culture and then internalised and appropriately enacted by its members (Lupton, 1998; Williams, 2001). This contrasts with other explanations of emotions that have dominated until of late (Lupton, 1998; Williams, 1998; Thoits, 1989).

Deborah Lupton (1998) proposes two typologies that enable the categorisation of the ways emotions have been conceptualised to date. She suggests that, broadly speaking, emotions have been conceptualised as *either* inherent within the individual body or as socio-cultural constructs. Lupton (1998) argues that Enlightenment thinkers favoured the former position, believing that emotions were innate and ‘natural’; contemporary academic work has, however, ‘sought to (re)open the debates ... and to celebrate the corporeal intimacies and

the affective dimensions of social life' (Bendelow and Williams, 1998: xvi). It is such work that would be classified within Lupton's second typology; works that view emotions as socio-cultural constructs and one which dominates a contemporary 'sociology of emotion' (Smart, 2008; Hochschild, 2003; Williams, 2001; Lupton, 1998).

Simon Williams (2001) proposes a similar analysis to that of Lupton's regarding the way social theory has thus far dealt with emotion. Rather than placing work within one of two 'typologies' as Lupton has done however, Williams suggests that theories of emotion exist on a continuum between 'organismic' and 'social constructionist' theories. Organismic theories concentrate on the biological and physiological aspects of emotion – not as a component of emotion, but as the cause. Noteworthy within this category is Charles Darwin. According to Williams (2001) Darwin emphasises the importance of emotional expression but understands such expressions using biological and evolutionary theory, rather than exploring the cultural or subjective meanings of emotional expressions. Darwin suggests that 'expressive actions' are 'innate' and 'inherited' from the actions and behaviours of prehistoric people (Williams, 2001: 40). Hochschild (2003a) similarly notes that Darwin considers emotions to be remnants of action – 'the emotion of love, for example, is the vestige of what was once a direct act of copulation' (Hochschild, 2003a: 217). Emotions then, are gestures or habits that have survived from once-useful behaviours and are therefore universal, rather than culturally specific (Hochschild, 2003a; Williams, 2001).

Both Hochschild (2003a) and Williams (2001) critique Darwin for failing to take account of the subjectivity or cultural variability of emotions. Williams suggests that Ekman's work attempts to move Darwinian theory forward by

suggesting that ‘the innate neural patterning of expression...is regulated by culturally variable “display rules”’ (Williams, 2001: 40). Ekman suggests that emotions such as happiness and anger are ‘naturally’ expressed through gestures such as a smile or frown; culturally specific display rules then act upon the individual affecting when and where these expressions become (in)appropriate. Despite this attempt to move Darwin ‘forward’, Hochschild (2003a) maintains that such a position still fails to take into account emotions as a subjective experience and argues that the impact of social forces on emotion is more subtle and complex than Ekman proposes. Such an idea is echoed throughout the work of those that Williams has labelled ‘social constructionist’.

Broadly speaking social constructionist positions argue that the role of biology with regards to emotion is overstated. It is the suggestion within much of the work of this kind that physiological changes accompany emotions, but do not explain them. In examining this viewpoint Williams (2001) points to the work of theorists such as McCarthy and Harré as examples of ‘strong’ social constructionism. For McCarthy, the mind, self and emotions are ‘emergent social properties’ (Williams, 2001: 45). McCarthy argues that emotions cannot be reduced to nor explained with reference to an organism. She suggests that emotions are,

‘not inside bodies, but rather actions we place in the world ... feelings are social ... constituted and sustained by group processes ... irreducible to the bodily organism and to the particular individual who feels them’

– McCarthy, 1989 (cited in Williams, 2001: 45)

Taking a similar position, Harré maintains that there is no such thing as ‘an emotion’ (Williams, 2001). Instead there are only various ways of acting and feeling emotionally. Harré suggests that emotions are reified and consequently,

they are often, incorrectly he asserts, seen to act upon an individual, determining their responses to the world and their behaviour towards others. Instead, then, a social constructionist model treats emotions as having no objective basis that determines behaviour; rather, it proposes that society shares an understanding of an emotion which individual members enact. This view fits most closely with the way Goffman's concept of 'frame' has been utilised within this project. It is argued within this project that experiences (including emotional ones) are 'organised' by pre-existing – though not objectively 'real' – 'frames', which enable events and situations to be interpreted and guide people to behave in relevant and appropriate ways.

Within the broader social constructionist model there are theoretical variations regarding the relationship between the individual, the wider social group and cultural ideas; as well as diverse ideas about the genesis of emotions. Lupton suggests that there are four different approaches within this model: structuralist, phenomenological, post-structuralist and psycho-dynamic. Within structuralist approaches Lupton (1998) places the work of the sociological 'founding fathers' – Marx, Durkheim, and Weber – alongside contemporary theorists such as Norbert Elias and Arlie Hochschild. Lupton suggests that structuralist accounts focus on the production of emotions in different social systems and explore how these emotions are utilised to meet the needs of these systems.

Phenomenological approaches include work by thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, alongside the theories of academics such as Norman Denzin, who have developed such work sociologically. Such thinkers have emphasised emotions as intersubjectively produced, focusing on the relationship

between the individual and the social world (Lupton, 1998). Post-structuralist accounts are identified by Lupton as the third approach to socio-cultural conceptions of emotion. The emphasis within these accounts is on the discursive construction of emotions and explores the cultural manifestations of emotion rather than inward experiences (Smart, 2008). Stevi Jackson (1993:207) proposes such an approach as appropriate when she argues that emotions are not observable phenomena, instead suggesting that there is 'no way of exploring love except through the ways it is talked and written about'. Emphasising this point, Jackson (1993: 207, citing Jagger: 1989) notes,

'We have no access to either our own emotions or to those of others, independent of or unmediated by the discourse of our culture'.

Theorising emotions within this approach then necessarily places an emphasis on what is said about emotion, but further than that, it suggests that our very sense of our own emotions – indeed our own subjectivities – are discursively constructed (Smart, 2008).

In contrast to the post-structural approach, which focuses on language and culture, the psycho-dynamic approach proposes that the foundations of emotions are pre-linguistic and therefore our feelings are generated and played out in the unconscious mind (Smart, 2008). Although suggesting that emotions have no essential essence, psycho-dynamic approaches emphasise the connections between emotionality and interactions that occurred before language-learning. From this position sociology will always, therefore, be limited in its understandings of emotion because (without some form of psychoanalysis) it cannot access the unconscious mind (Smart, 2008; Lupton, 1998).

Although Lupton (1998) and Williams (2001) draw on different theorists within their work they share an approach to organising existing work on emotion, positioning most of the literature in, or somewhere between, one of two 'camps' – the biological or the social. Turner and Stets (2006), in their analysis of the work done within the sociology of emotion, propose an alternative conceptualisation, however, and one which is not based on the dualism of society versus nature. They articulate five theoretical approaches to emotion, these being: the dramaturgical, the symbolic interactionist approach, interaction ritual theories, analyses that emphasise the role of power and status, and exchange theories. There are some significant overlaps between these theoretical approaches, especially in relation to the generation of emotions through interaction. That being said, they do vary in important ways.

Turner and Stets (2006) describe dramaturgical theories as those which emphasise the expressive capability of individuals, alongside the ability of the individual to take on different situationally-appropriate roles. Dramaturgical theories posit that within social life individuals make dramatic presentations and 'engage in strategic action directed by a cultural script' (Turner and Stets, 2006: 26). Cultural scripts are thought to direct which and where emotions are or are not appropriate and these constitute the emotional ideologies and rules of a culture. They also direct the precise ways in which emotions are to be displayed – the correct emotional 'vocabulary' and 'syntax'. Individuals then engage in 'impression management' in order to (at least appear to be) conforming to the appropriate cultural emotional script.

Arlie Hochschild's (2003) work is often positioned within this perspective because of her development and use of concepts such as 'feeling rules' and 'display

rules' (Turner and Stets, 2006). These concepts describe the rules about what one *should* feel in any given circumstance (feeling rules) and the rules that prescribe how (or if) one should display or *express* these feelings given that circumstance (display rules). Hochschild (2003) suggests that within capitalism a major form of social control comes through the surveillance of feelings, but it is the individual who has the burden of surveying and managing their emotions in order to render them 'fit for sale'. She refers to this process as 'emotion work'.

Dramaturgical theories argue that there are often emotional consequences of breaking the 'emotional rules'. These rules include, for example, feeling the 'wrong' feeling at the 'wrong' time, displaying a situationally 'inappropriate' emotion or an emotion 'inappropriately'. In these instances shame and embarrassment often result. Hochschild (2003) also suggests that there are further, more concrete implications of breaking emotional rules, such as losing one's job through failure to perform emotions correctly. This is particularly true for those who work in the service industry she argues, whose emotional management constitutes a huge part of their labour (Hochschild, 2003). Individual actors, then, are considered to have expressive capacity and 'doing' emotion is largely about the ability to use this capacity appropriately and effectively.

Unlike dramaturgical theories, that largely view the individual 'self' in relation to role performance(s), symbolic interactionists view the self as more than a series of dramatic presentations (Turner and Stets, 2006). Within symbolic interactionism the 'self' constitutes who the individual fundamentally 'is'. According to symbolic interactionist theories of emotion, the concept of self is the central dynamic behind emotional arousal. Following Mead's pragmatic view, symbolic interactionists argue that individuals alter their behaviour to make things

'work' in situations. How well things 'work' affects the generation of positive or negative emotions. Turner and Stets (2006) point to Cooley's theory of 'the looking glass self' as an example: for Cooley the 'self' directs behaviour and our response to other's 'imagined' opinions of this self leads to the generation of pride and/or shame, which for Cooley are the master emotions from which other emotions are generated.

Turner and Stets argue that many symbolic interactionists emphasise the importance of the confirmation or non-confirmation of the self in all interactions, especially in relation to the generation of emotion. Positive emotions are generated by the confirmation of self through the responses of others, conversely when confirmation is not achieved negative emotions such as shame, anger and guilt are experienced. Because the confirmation of self is so important most individuals have a number of behavioural and cognitive strategies that can be used to achieve, maintain and alter the (non/)confirmation between the individual's sense of self and the responses of the other.

Similarly Susan Shott (1979), in her symbolic interactionist analysis of emotional life, argues that emotions are constructed by social actors through their (affective) definition of the situation, and the interpretation and re-interpretation of behaviours (from both the self and the other). She suggests that 'the construction of emotions is fairly malleable and therefore subject to considerable definitional shaping and social and cultural influence' (Shott, 1979: 1323). She recognises that social norms set limits for action but maintains that it is individuals who construct their emotions. She claims that interpretation is a necessary part of 'being' emotional: we always engage in a process of interpretation of our own bodies and thoughts when working out how we feel; we also define a situation

through our interpretation and this, Shott maintains, is crucial for affective experience.

Interaction ritual theories draw heavily on Durkheim's work around emotions being generated through rituals and ritualised interaction (Turner and Stets, 2006). According to Turner and Stets (2006) Randall Collins' work exemplifies interaction ritual theories of emotion. Collins argues that different types of rituals that occur within interaction generate positive or negative emotional energy. Greetings, for example, are likely to produce low-intensity positive emotions, whereas enduring emotions are created by lengthier interactional 'encounters' that persist between space and time. Collins believes that through persistent (but not necessarily continuous) co-presence, talk and bodily gestures are more likely to synchronise, resulting in the generation of positive emotional energy. Over time this positive energy will create feelings of group cohesion and harmony between members. For Collins then, emotionally-charged rituals are the 'microfoundations of macrostructures' and underpin the social solidarity of any group living in interactional co-presence (Turner and Stets, 2006: 33). In a similar way to symbolic interactionism, emotions are seen as being generated through interaction, but it is the ritualised nature of this interaction that is emphasised within this theoretical framework.

Conversely, power and status theories recognise that relative access to resources has a significant impact on emotional states. Kemper, for example, proposes that when individuals have, or gain, power they feel positive emotions such as satisfaction, confidence and security. Alternatively when individuals lose or have little power they can experience negative emotions such as anxiety, fear and shame. How much power one has, then, directly impacts on one's emotional

state. When individuals' gain prestige, or receive deference from someone, they can experience positive emotions such as those outlined in relation to power. These positive emotions may also, however, generate positive emotions in others and this strengthens the bond of solidarity between the givers and receivers of status. Kemper's later work with Randall Collins expounds the notion of 'expectation states' regarding the holding, gaining and losing of power and prestige (Turner and Stets, 2006). Kemper and Collins note that individuals have expectations about their level of power and their relative status, when these expectations are met positive emotions are generated. Conversely, when their expectations are failed to be met, or shown to be incorrect, negative emotions may result (Turner and Stets, 2006).

Exchange theories of emotion similarly make reference to differential resource allocation by proposing that social actors incur 'costs' and make 'investments' in order to secure resources ('payoffs') from other social actors. Actors seek to maximise profits by gaining more from others than they give in return, though they often do so within the normative framework of social fairness and justice, principles pre-given by society (Turner and Stets, 2006). Emotions are generated by the ways in which people navigate social exchanges, alongside their outcomes. Different types of exchange have, according to Lawler, different potential for arousing intensity of emotion (positive or negative). Some emotions, however, are built into the exchange itself. Tension and conflict, for example, are an inherent part of negotiations. Exchange theories have also recognised that emotions can be generated *outside* the actual exchange itself. This is because frequent exchanges can be objectified and symbolised and when this occurs the

symbols, rather than the exchange *per se*, can activate the arousal of positive or negative emotions.

What all the theories outlined above have in common is a shared proposal that emotions are the product of interplay between the individual with society. It is the extent to which they emphasise the role of the individual in the *generation* of emotions that largely differentiates them from one another. Dramaturgical theories posit that emotions *arise* within and through interaction but are *managed* in accordance with normative rules (Turner and Stets, 2006). The study of emotions then needs to focus on the rules around the 'feeling' and 'displaying' of emotions, and the institutions that impinge upon the right or the ability of the individual to feel and display their own 'authentic' feelings (Hochschild, 2003). Symbolic interactionists emphasise the high degree to which emotions are generated through interaction; though unlike dramaturgical theorists, who emphasise the importance of congruity between behaviour and social rules, symbolic interactionists emphasise the necessary congruence between our own and the other's sense of who we are.

Interaction ritual theories, power and status theories and exchange theories likewise argue that emotions are generated through interaction. It is the ritualised nature of this interaction that is crucial for Collins (1981), such that emotions can be conceptualised according to the time and space they occupy in the lives of social actors. Power and Status theories propose that emotions are generated through the operations of power and the bestowing of status, whilst exchange theories suggest that emotions are aroused according to the outcomes of interaction and an individual's interpretation of the situation as being favourable or unfavourable in relation to their expectations.

This thesis proposes an alternative way of conceptualising emotion, one which focuses not on how emotions are generated but on how they are organised. To do so, Goffman's (1974) concept of 'frame' was utilised because it proposes that individual experiences and social conceptualisations of emotion can be understood best through a combination of dramaturgical, symbolic interactionist, interaction ritual and power and status theories. Rather than aligning with one of the approaches to emotions outlined above, then, this project employed Goffman's (1981; 1974; 1972; 1969) sociology because doing so allows the theorist to understand the relationships between love and the individual and society, without abandoning or marginalising either.

About 'frame analysis' and its relevance for a sociology of love

Goffman's sociology proposes that individuals are actively involved in the social world and *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1974) attempts to account for the means of this involvement. Social life is not considered by Goffman to be a moment-by-moment construction generated by individuals. Instead Goffman (1981: 63) argues that

'the individuals I know don't invent the world of chess when they sit down to play, or the stock market when they buy some shares, or the pedestrian traffic system when they maneuver [sic] through the streets. Whatever the idiosyncrasies of their own motives and interpretations, they must gear their participation into what is available by way of standard doings and standard reasons for doing these doings'.

In this quote he is pointing to the fact that most of the situations that we find ourselves in have meaning for us prior to our involvement in them. For Goffman, the presence of pre-existing 'frameworks of understanding', or 'frames', accounts for this phenomenon. 'Frames', then, are the organising mechanisms that provide pre-existing meaning and understanding to the world we encounter daily. Goffman

(1981; 1974) does not, however, propose that 'frames' are devices which *determine* behaviour; instead he considers them to be tools that enable individuals to interpret situations and guide social action.

With regards to love, the background assumption or hypothesis of this project was that in order for people to be able to express internally experienced feelings to others in a way that makes sense to them, ideas about love – what it is, how we 'do' it and who we should do it to – must be shared by members of a society. This thesis proposes, then, that ideas about love are 'held in common' (Durkheim, 2001[1912]) by members of society and that these ideas enable social actors to express love to one another in a *meaningful way*, so that what is expressed by one person and what is understood by the other as having been expressed, are the same thing.

As can be seen within the literature reviews of chapters one and two, however, the idea that 'love' is a concept shared by members of a society is implied and/or treated as if it were a truism that need not be stated or accounted for. Key sociological literature, for example the works of theorists such as Bauman (2003), Fromm (1995) and Giddens' (1992; 1991), evaluate shared ideas about love in modern and contemporary society without first seeking to understand, empirically at least, what these shared ideas actually are. Within Bauman's work in particular, claims are made about the amorality of contemporary love by describing what contemporary love is like and yet his work lacks empirical confirmation. In this respect his work on love is potentially problematic; if what Bauman claims about shared concepts of love do not correspond with peoples' actual experiences and understandings of love, then this may undermine his conclusions about the implications of these understandings. This thesis therefore proposes that empirical

enquiry about how people (collectively) conceive, perceive and do 'love' is necessary *before* seeking to make claims about the moral (or not) nature of these shared understandings; this research project began this process of empirical enquiry.

Following Goffman (1974) in his use of the language of 'frames' and 'frameworks', within the project the sum total of shared ideas about love is referred to as the 'love frame'. The concept of the 'love frame' is considered both a theoretical construct that describes commonly-agreed upon understandings of love, as well as being an organising presence in the world that guides the behaviours of love that are played out within interaction, and described or performed through cultural representation.

Chapter three explores in greater detail Goffman's (1974) concept of frame as it is articulated in *Frame Analysis*. It proposes that using this approach allows the social theorist to acknowledge the role that shared ideas have in shaping behaviour, and at the same time recognises that it is individuals who use these ideas. Social life, then, is not merely a passive process that happens to individuals; rather it is something that people engage with. After explaining the main features of Goffman's 'frames', chapter three then applies the concept to discussions of love. It suggests that behaviours used to express feelings of love are not generated spontaneously *through* those feelings. Rather, love is organised – such that there are shared ideas about love that pre-exist individual involvement in love relationships. This enables many individuals to understand and categorise their own feelings in similar ways, and then express these feelings in ways that are meaningful to themselves and others.

It is suggested that 'love frames': enable individuals to interpret their own feelings as love; make possible the recognition of the behavioural displays of love from others; and both enables and limits the expression of an individual's own feelings in order to be meaningful and recognisable to others. It is argued that approaching love through the concept of frame allows us to acknowledge the emotional life of the individual *and* the affective context in which that individual finds them self: it is the individual that navigates the social world, but they do so with a 'map' that facilitates this navigation.

Some distinctions are made by Goffman (1974) regarding 'primary' frameworks of meaning, these being the 'schemata of interpretation' that render 'what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful' (Goffman, 1974: 21). Of the two primary frameworks he identifies – the natural and the social – this chapter focuses on social frames because love is considered to be part of a social framework of interpretation. It is also argued that social frames contain moral actions and thus analysing 'love' as a social frame provides a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between love and morality. These ideas will be introduced here and returned to in chapter seven. The chapter then concludes by briefly discussing the methodological challenges associated with frame analysis, primarily because Goffman provided no guidance about how one might actually go about doing a 'frame analysis'

Chapter four develops this discussion and describes the methods that were used to generate empirical data. Individual interviews, focus group discussions and qualitative questionnaires were all used as part of exploring how a 'frame analysis' may be done. I conclude by arguing that individual interviews or focus group discussions could be initiated through completion of qualitative questionnaires as

a way of orientating individuals to the topic. This may provide a fruitful method when identifying 'frames' through written and verbal research accounts, by allowing individuals to identify and provide concrete examples of behaviours in written form and then explain these as part of a wider discussion that draws on their own experiences.

Towards a Sociology of Love

The empirical data that was gathered and used to identify shared understandings of love, and thus provide a description of the love frame, is presented in chapter five. With regards to a contemporary UK understanding of what love 'is', the research found that people spoke of love as an individual feeling and one that is focused on the qualities and attributes of another person – though this was variable depending on who was being loved. Respondents spoke of a 'hierarchy' of love in relation to the expectations they had regarding the expressions of love and the intensity of feelings. The most meaningful (and emotionally intense) love relationships, and those that required the most 'work' in terms of expression, were those that were chosen by the participants. Relationships of choice, such as those associated with partnership love, were described as taking priority over encounters with generalised others and to some extent, over relationships of circumstance. Family love, with the exception of loving one's children, was considered important but because there was a sense of duty associated with loving one's family, the positively-experienced emotional intensity associated with loving one's romantic partner was lower than within relationships of choice.

Seven thematic categories were identified within the data and these categories all contained ways in which participants came to 'know' love,

understood how to 'do' love and were able to 'recognise' and receive love from others. These categories were: 'Togetherness', 'Closeness', 'Positive Communication', 'Knowledge', 'Care', 'Prioritising the Other', and 'Intensity of Feeling and Focused Attention'. This chapter examines these categories in detail and each category is explicated through extracts from the research accounts of participants. The chapter concludes by suggesting some ways love might 'look' in contemporary society. It is within chapter five that empirical support for the first sociological claim about love can be seen; this chapter is a theoretical exposition of the ways in which love matters and impacts upon personal lives.

Chapter six then explores these categories and proposes ways in which an empirically-grounded sociology of love can contribute to wider social theorising, the second claim of sociology regarding love. In looking at the concept of 'togetherness', for example, the implications of decreasing amounts of time spent with children, for their overall well-being, can be questioned in the light of potential interventions that aim to encourage more parents into working outside the home. This is a concrete way in which a sociology of love could contribute to the sociology of the family. Other potential contributions are also proposed, alongside identifying avenues for future research.

The third claim about love within sociological theorising is addressed within chapter seven through a comparative analysis between the findings of the empirical research described in chapter five and the sociological theory examined in chapters one and two. According to Ira L. Reiss (1960: 141) over fifty years the discipline was 'lacking a basic framework for a sociological theory of love'. When I began this project it seemed that there was very little sociological literature about love and as such Reiss' remark appeared to have remained accurate, and we were

still lacking a basic framework for a sociological theory of love. Closer examination revealed this to be untrue, however. Upon closer examination there was in fact a 'mine' of sociological theorising about love, and just as a mine is often hidden until someone does a little digging, so too has been the case with regards a sociology of love. Part of my research project was an excavation of this material – academically quarrying to extract the valuable material; others have done similar. Carol Smart (2008), for example, has traced 'love' within sociological literature. Her work provided a starting point for my own exploring of sociological theorising about love, and whilst it was initially helpful, my work proposes that it has limitations due to the too-narrow categorisations within which she places existing literature.

Smart (2008) identifies two ways in which sociology has so far dealt with love. Firstly, through 'translation' in which love is 'turned into' something else. According to Smart the translation approach seeks to understand love by studying phenomena "near to' love...but which can not really be taken as love by another name' (Smart, 2008: 54). Common theoretical 'translations' often occur between the concepts of love and sex, love and commitment, and love and care (Smart, 2008). Conversely the disdainful approach, the second way sociology has engaged with love, does focus much more explicitly on love but does so pejoratively. Included in this body of literature is much feminist writing, which suggests that gendered imbalances of power have caused men and women to experience love differently. Other theorists have similarly remained critical of love whilst moving away from gendered accounts. Smart forwards theories by authors such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Bauman (2003), all of whom argue that changes in the organisation of society have negatively impacted our expectations and experiences of love.

Whilst I think that the two typologies (translation and disdainful) she proposes initially appear to be helpful in organising existing literature, there is much theorising that does not fit not within these categories. Simmel (1984), for example, explores love explicitly but does not do so critically. His work, then, fits into neither category. I would also question her positioning of theorists such as Bauman (2003) within the 'disdainful' approach. Bauman proposes that love itself has the potential to positively transform the individual and create strong social bonds between people. Bauman is critical, not of love, but of modern society in which 'love' has been transformed from something remarkable to something that barely resembles 'real' love. I would argue that his work falls neatly into neither category; the categories are, therefore, problematic.

Chapter one examines existing theoretical work on love but does so without reference to analytical categories at this stage. Instead work is organised along historical lines according to whether the writer can be considered a 'classical' or 'contemporary' theorist. This was because I wanted to map the territory and excavate the sociological 'mine' before sorting through the material along lines of similarity and discontinuity. Chapter two is the result of this sorting work. In analysing the literature two general approaches were identified within this project with regards to love, and much of the work on love within sociology can be positioned within one of these perspectives. I call these approaches the 'being-for-the-other' perspective and the 'individualisation-of-love' perspective. The first treats love as an objective moral phenomenon that has the potential to create solidarity between members of a society (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995[1956]; Weber, 1991[1915]; Scheler, 1973). The second proposes that love is culturally and historically variable, influenced by wider social processes. The

'individualisation-of-love' thesis points to the increasing responsibility the individual must take in navigating their personal lives and the consequences of this trend on social relations.

The 'being-for-the-other' approach proposes that love has the ability to create and maintain social bonds and ties between members and is thus foundational to the existence of social solidarity. Love's ability to construct and maintain this solidarity exists because love takes responsibility for the wellbeing of others. Importantly these obligations exist not just to those we choose to enter into elective relationships with, but all those we co-exist with. The Judeo-Christian command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' has been forwarded as a description of this loving obligation. Love within this approach is conceptualised as a *moral phenomenon*; some also consider it an objective one, claiming that love has an essential nature (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1992, 1973). Such ideas are evident in the works of classical sociologists such as Weber (1991[1915]), Simmel (1984) and Scheler (1973), alongside modern and contemporary social theorists of which Fromm (1995), Bauman (2003) and Kaufmann (2011) can be included.

The second theoretical perspective – the 'individualisation-of-love' approach – proposes that love has no objective nature but is socially plastic, changing over time. Much of the writing within this approach seeks to acknowledge the historical changes and explicate current trends: the main trend being towards increasing individualisation – in society in general and in love in particular. 'Individualisation' describes a social context within which individuals are afforded the freedom to construct their own identities and create their own life narratives; it in fact demands that they do so and consequently individual

autonomy is a prized possession of the modern individual (Bauman, 2008; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

Individuals within modern society have become responsible for *all* aspects of their lives, including the construction and maintenance of social bonds (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Love, it is claimed, has become the modern source of solidarity and ‘togetherness’ is now at the very heart of our lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The literature within this perspective proposes, however, that combining a desire/demand for individual autonomy, with expectations of experiencing emotionally fulfilling ‘togetherness’, is challenging for individuals and necessitates continual assessment and reassessment of their life trajectories to check that they are ‘on course’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991). Love commitments therefore exist until-further-notice, only as long as they support the individual in their direction of travel (Bauman, 2003). Love has thus become increasingly fraught with risk (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991).

These two perspectives were platforms from which comparative analysis between theory and data took place. So having explored what the existing literature *thinks* love ‘looks like’ in chapters one and two, and then identifying what the love frame may actually ‘look like’ in chapter five, chapter seven provides a comparison between the two. Part I of chapter seven synthesises chapters one and two with the findings outlined in chapter five and compares the love frame, as identified within the research data, with both theoretical perspectives explored in chapter two. It suggests that there are overlaps between conceptualisations of love proposed in the being-for-the-other approach and the research-identified ‘love frame’. ‘Knowledge’ and ‘care’, for example, were identified as being important

aspects of love as it is understood in contemporary society and these are also foundational to the doing of 'genuine' love (Fromm, 1995). Nonetheless, the research findings also propose that the sphere in which we express our loving behaviour has 'shrunk'. In line with the proposals made in the individualisation-of-love perspective, then, it appears that contemporary love *has* become particularised. Importantly, however, the data does not support the ideas contained within this approach regarding a trend towards love as a self-seeking emotion, nor does it support the claim that relationships have become disposable (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003).

The chapter suggests that the accounts of the research participants are more closely aligned with the ways in which existing theory talks about 'genuine love', than it does about individualised love, though neither theoretical approach appears to adequately capture love as it is experienced in society. It is within these final chapters that the third major claim about love within society is examined. This third claim concerns the potential of love to build a sense of unity and solidarity between members of a society through unconditional and universal validation of the other as important and through the acceptance of responsibility for their well-being. Sociological literature proposing that love has this potential also argue that it is just that, a potential. This is because modern love does not universally and unconditionally value others, nor does it take responsibility for the well-being of the other. On this basis, then, it has been argued that modern love lacks a moral dimension (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973).

Part II of this chapter challenges this idea, claiming that whilst love in modern society is not universal or unconditional, it is still moral. Using Goffman's (1974; 1972) concepts of 'frame', 'deference' and 'demeanour', it is argued that the

obligations that exist within modern love are interactional. Descriptions within the research accounts proposed that love seeks to care for others and set them apart from those around them. One such way this was described as being achieved is by showing 'special deference' to the beloved. This communicates to the other that they are loved and bestows value on them as a unique and loveable person. This in itself is moral. Secondly, however, fulfilling one's obligations at any given point creates expectations that these obligations will continue to be met in the future. Continuing to meet these obligations is, therefore, also a moral action that contributes to feelings of 'life (or love) as normal' (Misztal, 2001). On this basis the research argues that the sociological literature on love and morality overstates the amorality of modern love. Moreover, it is argued that conceptions of 'genuine love' within this literature are better conceptualised as 'compassion' and 'mercy'. By distinguishing between 'genuine love/compassion/mercy' and 'modern love' it is possible, then, to value both conceptualisations as contributing to the morality of social life.

Chapter One: Existing Sociological Analyses of Love

In exploring the presence of the concept of 'love' within sociological thought Carol Smart (2008) proposes a typology that organises *some* of the existing literature along two lines of approach: one of 'translation' and the other of 'disdain'. Whilst such an approach may have some use, there is sociological literature about love which Smart does not include within her analysis. Indeed, much of the existing literature fits neatly into neither category. Supplementing the typology with additional categories does not prove fruitful either, primarily because many theories fit into multiple categories and it is thus difficult to position them. For this reason the literature discussed below remains uncategorised. Instead it is presented according to its historical location within social theory – that is whether it is considered part of 'classical' or 'contemporary' theorising. Even this distinction is not wholly adequate because some theorists, Fromm for example, fit neatly in to neither category.

With this in mind the chapter will begin with a discussion of love within the work of classical social theorists Max Weber, Karl Marx, Georg Simmel and Max Scheler. Erich Fromm's contribution to the field of social theory began in the earlier half of the twentieth century and so he is included with these 'classical thinkers'. Those in the 'contemporary social theorising' category began their theoretical work during the latter half of the twentieth century and it is this division that has decided their placement within this chapter. This includes the work of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), Illouz (2012), Bauman (2003), Giddens (1992), Kaufmann (2011) and Luhmann (2012). There is a further section entitled 'love and feminism' which is presented as a discrete category. This is due to the

similarities between many of the feminist accounts. Within this section the work of Jackson (1995), Langford (1999), Duncombe and Marsden (1993), Greer (2006), Firestone (1970) and Safilios-Rothschild (1977) are explored.

The categories themselves should be thought of as arbitrary tools of organisation and not discrete analytical typologies. The chapter concludes by pointing out some continuities and differences between theories and it is this, it is argued, that provides the most fruitful (albeit not straightforward) analysis of existing literature. By drawing out similarities between theories two theoretical perspectives or pictures of love, which dominate social theorising, have been identified: one that is concerned with understanding the increasing individualisation of love; and the other that seeks to elucidate the objective basis of love and relate this to issues of morality and social solidarity. Within this latter perspective 'genuine' love is conceived of as 'being-for-the-other'. Chapter two contains a more in-depth discussion of these two theoretical perspectives about love. These sociological 'narratives' are especially well-developed within the work of a few key authors. Thus where such work is mentioned in brief within this current chapter, it is developed and applied within the next. Some theorists have written more extensively on love than others and it is largely this factor that has led to the relative 'weighting' of discussion within this chapter. This chapter contains the findings of a theoretical excavation of love in social theory.

Love in Classical Social Theorising

On first examination it appears that classical theorists had very little to say about the emotional life of individuals. Macro social processes, political institutions and

social order seemed the pre-occupation of many; even Max Weber, who suggested that the individual could not be overlooked, appears to take little interest in the individual's emotional world. Yet, Weber and Marx both provide some commentary on love. Simmel and Scheler go even further, examining the emotion in greater detail. This section will begin by exploring the work of Weber (1991[1915]) and his discussion of love as a 'sphere' of life which stands in tension with bureaucratic, Capitalist society. Marx (1975[1843]), despite having much less to say on the matter, proposes a similar argument, suggesting that the values of love and capitalism are conflicting. Implicit in his work is the idea that love has been dominated by Capitalism.

Simmel's work (1984), perhaps more than any other, is concerned to tell the reader what love is and his essay is 'definitional' rather than explicitly critical. Scheler (1973) places great emphasis on love, suggesting that love is the basis for true solidarity. Fromm (1995[1956]) provides similar arguments, suggesting that there is a genuine love that is the foundation of solidarity between people and at the same time he argues that this love has been corrupted by capitalism; like Marx, Fromm is critical of love within capitalism.

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Max Weber's theoretical piece 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions' is where he engages with the issue of 'love'. Despite Weber not being considered a 'sociologist of emotion' this issue is, according to Bellah (1999), of central concern to Weber and therefore should not be overlooked, even when one is not approaching it with the aim of understanding emotions in social life.

Fundamentally Weber argues that tensions exist between Religion and the world and he offers a theoretical *schema* for understanding these tensions within

different value spheres. Various religions have been typified by Weber and are used in order to demonstrate the crucial tensions that exist between 'life orders' and different religious ideas. Central to these discussions is the notion of a 'religious ethic of brotherliness', which is for Weber synonymous with salvation religions such as Judaism and Christianity.

Weber argues that prophetic/salvation religions (especially those of Judeo-Christian origin) have had a profound impact on the social world by redefining social, moral and ethical conduct and communities; Weber (1991[1915]: 329) states that "prophecy [in holy scripture] has created a new social community". 'Neighbourliness', was at one time predominantly an economic ethic: economic association with a person provided a structure for who is considered one's 'neighbour' and for community in general. Weber argues, however, that through the growth of Judeo-Christian religions this ethic of community and the construction of ideas about who is one's 'neighbour', has transferred to members of faith through the construction of a shared community known as the Church – but importantly one that extends vast beyond the boundaries of any given particular church and instead refers to a body of people united in their religious beliefs.

'Love one's neighbour as thyself' is a central ethical position of salvation religions and yet within Judeo-Christian communities who exactly constitutes ones 'neighbour' has greatly extended. Weber's work suggests that salvation religions depersonalise and objectify love through the extension of the concept of 'neighbour' from a personal individual to humanity in general. Weber (1991: 330) refers to this as an 'objectless acosmism of love', which Bellah (1999) translates as 'world-denying love', describing a supposed love for *all* people independent of

context or circumstance. The ethical demand of salvation religions lies in the 'direction of a universalist brotherhood, which goes beyond all barriers of societal associations, often including that of one's own faith' (Weber, 1991: 330); instead one must *choose* to love all people, simply *because* they are people.

Weber's work discusses the particular ways in which this 'world-denying', or brotherly, love stands in tension with the economic, the political, the aesthetic, the erotic and the intellectual spheres, with each sphere containing its own inner logic and value system. This chapter will not explore these particular spheres in detail as it is beyond the scope of this work. Nonetheless it is worth noting that the tensions between the different value systems/spheres and salvation religions arise from 'an intrinsic incompatibility of value' (Bellah, 1999: 19); 'the clash... is inherent in [their]... inner logic' (Brubaker, 1991). Weber suggests, for example, that within the political sphere, rationalized bureaucratic state apparatus operate in a 'matter of fact' manner and without regard for 'the person', and therefore without hate and without love. This is directly oppositional to the religious ethic of brotherliness, which proposes a type of universal (albeit depersonalized) love for *all*.

A second way in which value spheres may come into tension with religious ethics is not only through incompatibility of value but through direct competition. In Weber's evaluation of the 'erotic sphere' an additional understanding of love can be identified and one which has a much narrower conceptualisation of the emotion: partnership love in sexual relationships. This involves the subjective experiencing of *feelings* of love, rather than the moral command of 'doing' love found within religion and societies founded on such religions. Weber (1991: 343) describes sexual love as 'the greatest irrational force of life'. Sexual love, for Weber,

provides the conditions for two individuals to experience a 'direct fusion of souls', allowing individuals to give themselves fully to another person and experience a natural source of creative power and one that rivals feelings of religious transcendence (Weber, 1991: 344). Particularised, sexual love is radically different from the rational, general and depersonalised love of the religious ethic of brotherliness, but offers an equally powerful access to sensations of salvation. Weber suggests that because of this, devotion to God may be replaced by devotion to a person, as individuals seek to experience worldly love through sexual relationships. Tension, therefore exist between the two value systems of religion and erotic personal life. Weber suggests that the more rational (or depersonalised) the religion, the greater the tension between itself and eroticism.

Weber's writing on 'love' is relatively limited within his corpus of work, but according to Bellah (1999) it is of fundamental importance, not only for our understanding of Weber's sociology of religion but also for understanding Weber's views regarding the emergence of capitalism and the modern world. Although Weber's essay proposes to explore 'religious rejections of the world', it is questionable whether 'Religion' rejected the world or whether the world in fact rejected Religion (and the values within religions). Weber suggests that due to the incompatibility of values the world-denying love of the salvation religions has no place in the world today, with one exception: the sphere of intimate, personal life. Weber suggests that this is perhaps the sole place in the modern world in which there is space for such an acosmistic love. According to Symonds and Pudsey (2007: 63), Weber 'implicitly advocates such an ethic [of brotherliness]... as a means to living a life sensitive to human suffering in the face of the impersonal structures of Modernity'. Weber's work implies that it is from within the intimate

sphere that we might attempt to 'escape from the "iron cage" constructed by Western rationalism' (Scaff, 1989: 737). Depersonalised love is presented as a moral imperative, perhaps because it unites *all* people regardless of social position and resources.

Unlike Weber's work which discusses love in perhaps its broadest sense – universal love – Karl Marx's (1975[1843]) brief commentary on the subject is much narrower, involving only love within families. What Weber and Marx share, however, are their analyses of love as standing in tension with worldly values, such as money, rationality and politics. Marx (1975) discusses love within his essay 'Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State', specifically in relation to Hegel's defence of private property and primogeniture: the rights of the eldest son to inherit an entire estate. According to Marx (1975: 167), 'Hegel judged the class of landed property to be capable of adaptation to 'political position' because of its 'basis in family life'. For Hegel, love was the basis, the principle and the spirit informing family life (Marx, 1975). Marx critiqued Hegel's position, not because he disagreed with Hegel's conceptualisation of love, but because Marx believed that landed private property contradicts love and therefore contradicts the principle of family life. Marx argued that primogeniture and landed private property is in radical tension to family life, because it does not allow property to pass equally between equally loved children. In cases of unequal inheritance, therefore, love *has not* been the real, effective and determining factor (Marx, 1975). Thus Marx fundamentally disagrees with Hegel's proposition that primogeniture may be politically beneficial, instead emphasising the ways in which it is antithetical to family life and therefore to family love. Love, then, is undermined within and *by* Capitalist society.

Like Weber, Marx is noting the tensions that exist between economic and political values and love. To all intents and purposes, Marx is suggesting that an individual's experience of familial love is mediated through the social system – society creates the conditions within which we practice and experience love. This is a thoroughly 'sociological position' and perhaps surprisingly, not one that is shared by all sociologists. Georg Simmel (1984) was one of the few 'Classical' sociologists to provide a focused account of love, but his essay 'On Love (a fragment)' provides an account of love which seems to be almost devoid of 'society'.

Simmel argues that love has typically been thought of in two ways – as egoistic (for the self) or as altruistic (for the other). He argues, however, that viewing love through either of these lenses fails to take into account the essence of love, suggesting that even when combined as concepts (egoistic *and* altruistic) they are insufficient in describing the nature of love; instead, Simmel argues, motivation and action based on love is 'distinctive and primary' (Simmel, 1984: 154). According to Simmel (1984:157) love has an 'inner nature' which, when love is described solely as a plurality of factors (for example, sensuality and sentiment), fails to be captured: 'love itself is a psychic act' and therefore it cannot be analysed or understood as a sum of its parts or elements; neither can it be said that only elements of a person love, rather it is something the whole person does or feels. Moreover, Simmel emphasises love as coming *from* the subject – an intention focused on the object of love – rather than arising between persons or being motivated by the 'other'¹. In this way love is wholly individual. Love then, does not 'need' an 'other', and Simmel (1984: 163) refers to this as 'love idling'. It could be

¹The term 'other' is one used by Simmel to mean 'the person who is not me' and it is in this context – rather than the feminist work of Simone de Beauvoir (1988) – that 'other' is used in this paper.

argued that he provides an explanation for the phenomenon of unrequited love, something wholly ignored within other theorising. Nonetheless, the idea that love is an intention or capacity is prominent in other literature, Erich Fromm's (1995) particularly, and it is interesting to note continuities between social thinkers who have thus far, it seems, remained theoretical strangers.

Whilst Simmel explores love relationship outside a romantic partnership, he does spend time explaining his position regarding the links between love and sex, suggesting that whilst a connection should not be dismissed, to make too firm a connection is to build a 'treacherous bridge' (Simmel, 1984: 165). He recognises that feelings of love and the 'awakening of the sexual drive' often arise at the same time but that love and 'isolated sensuality' are mutually exclusive; sensual pleasure as a means in itself serves a solipsistic purpose and is thus the antithesis of love. Love, for Simmel, is detached from the rational process of life and it therefore lies outside the nexus of means and ends. As will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter, the notion that love exists outside rationality is one that is echoed in Bauman's (2003; 2001; 2000) work on love and responsibility –in which both are conceptualised as existing *prior* to rational thought. Indeed Bauman concludes that the introduction of rationality to love and responsibility signifies the end of any moral dimension inherent within them.

Simmel also rejects the notion that love exists as an evolutionary drive, suggesting that as 'human material' is largely undifferentiated, pairing is largely irrelevant for the next generation. Although each human being *appears* to be different to one another, Simmel argues that there is so little 'genuine' biological and genetic difference, that on the whole who one procreates with is of little significance for the 'healthy' continuation of the human species. Instead, he argues,

spousal choice only becomes important when people become individualised – as only then can a choice be right or wrong. Simmel suggests that individualisation leads people to focus on the spiritual qualities of a partner (c.f. Fromm, 1995) rather than biological fitness, and could thus be seen as forwarding an explanation of why it is only recently that love has come to be seen as the basis for marriage or partnerships.

Much of Simmel's essay is concerned with explicating his own position on what love is and it is only towards the end of the essay that he begins to explore any connections between society and love. He does suggest that different kinds of love play a function in maintaining social solidarity (c.f. Greer, 2006; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Weber, 1991). 'Universal philanthropy', for example, is a dispassionate type of love that focuses not on the unique attributes of one other, but on abstract generalities of many; feelings of love are no longer focused on individual uniqueness but between persons because they are persons (cf. Fromm, 1995; Weber, 1991). Simmel argues that this type of love is necessary for the continuation of society; without it, he posits, the constant mutual contact – as a consequence of both our inherent sociality and an intensification of our close proximity – would be unbearable. Undoubtedly there is a moral element within Simmel's work in which love has the potential to create and maintain human social bonds.

Although Simmel's examination of love is relatively detailed, the connections Simmel makes between love, morality and social solidarity is less developed than the analyses of other social thinkers (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973). Max Scheler's work is interesting in this regard because he attempts to deal with love as both a feeling and as actions in the world. These

actions include love as an act of consciousness and as an act of responsibility for both the self and other. Much of Scheler's work proposes that love as feeling and action is central to the moral life. Love, Scheler (1992; 1973; 1961) argues, is the basis of all human life; it is 'the most fundamental act of the human person, more original than knowing and willing' (Dy, 1999: 75). According to Scheler, love in its broadest sense, is an act of consciousness and one which precedes every other act of consciousness such as willing, knowing, judging and rationalising.

Fundamental to Scheler's work is the idea that whenever we experience someone or something we are either intuitively 'drawn to' or 'pushed away' from it. This phenomenon is the *experiencing* of values (the action of valuing and disvaluing). Love as an act of consciousness, is foundational to all other acts of consciousness. This is because prior to every perception there exists a 'value-ception' (Scheler, 1973) – the intuitively felt attraction or repulsion from that which we are experiencing.

In all experiences an experience of value or that of disvalue is pre-given. It is only after such value experiences that an act of thought, judgment, or of will can be applied to that which is thus given in intentional feeling.

– Frings, 1965: 87

Fundamentally, this attraction (or repulsion) is an act of love (or conversely, hate). Acts of love and hatred are, then, fundamental to all acts of willing and thinking.

Love, in a much narrower sense is also 'a primitive and immediate mode of emotional response to the core of value of things and persons' (Dy, 1999: 77). The emotional response is that of the enhancement of values; Scheler thus describes

love as a movement passing from a lower value to a higher one². Love looks to the establishment of high *possibilities* of value, whilst remaining indifferent to whether the values exist in the beloved or not; love is creative in that it sees ‘more’ of what is there in the love object (Scheler, 1992). It does not, however, demand that these values *ought* to be there when they are not; it does not love the potentiality of the beloved, nor is it preoccupied with the particular characteristics of the individual person. Instead, ‘the primary orientation of love is towards [higher] values, and towards the objects discernible, through those values, as sustaining them’ (Scheler, 1992: 72); ‘In love, we do not discover values, we discover that everything is more valuable’ (Scheler cited in Dy, 1999: 79). That is not to say that ‘loving’ does not include the love of particular aspects of persons – Scheler suggests that love exists in three forms: the spiritual love of the person, the mental love of the individual self, and passionate love that relates to the sensory experiences of the beloved. Nonetheless, Scheler maintains that love is *primarily* an act and a ‘movement of intention’ (Scheler, 1992; 1961), not a feeling-state brought about in reaction to the particular characteristics of the other. Thus love has a moral character inasmuch as without it our experiences with (and of) other persons lead us to see them as ‘social personalities’.

Scheler argues that all living things are capable of being seen as more valuable than merely pleasant to the senses and that when we act towards

² Scheler proposes that an *a priori* value-order exists in which values are ordered hierarchically and this hierarchical ordering of values is stable and unchanging. Sensory and vital values are values pertaining to ‘life’ and are applicable to all organisms, whilst spiritual values and values of the holy are values of the ‘person’; spiritual and holy values exist only because humans can transcend the biological aspects of themselves. Hierarchically, sensory values are lower values than vital values, whilst both sensory and vital values are lower than spiritual values. Holiness is the highest value under which all other values are subordinate.

individuals on this basis we are engaging in the act of loving. Loving as an action placed in the world is an idea shared by other social thinkers. Scheler argues that fellow feeling is a capacity of the individual; whilst Simmel describes love as coming *from* the subject – as an *intention* focused on the object of love – rather than being something arising between persons or being motivated by the ‘other’. Erich Fromm (1995[1956]) similarly argues that love is a capacity or a faculty of the individual, rather than an emotion/feeling ‘chanced upon’ by finding the ‘right person’ who is ‘loveable’. Fromm (1995: 47) suggests that ‘to love somebody is the actualisation and concentration of the power *to* love’; loving, then, is an individual capacity, rather than the product of a relationship. Unfortunately, according to Fromm, most people believe and act as if love is the product of luck or chance and so, in order to increase one’s chances of being loved, focus on being loveable in order to be loved *by* others, rather than focusing on how to love others.

Fromm also suggests that within modern society there is too much emphasis placed on the ‘object’ of love (the ‘who’) – the consequence of this being that people believe that loving is easy *when* they find the right person. Fromm argues that this is not the case and that the faculty of loving (the ‘how’) has to be *developed*, it has to be learnt and practiced as does every other art. A huge barrier to the mastery of love, then, is both people’s misunderstanding of the nature of love and also, predominantly, the organisation of society. According to Fromm, modern society is antithetical to love and to the mastery of an art in general. Love, for Fromm, profits the soul and for this reason, he suggests, is seen as being significantly less important than the achievement of success, prestige, money and power. Consequently few people actually experience genuine love.

Fromm believes that love is central to the individual psyche and to the functioning of society. Love, he suggests, is a theory of man – although animals clearly develop attachments they do not love. This is because, according to Fromm, love is the mature answer to the problem of existence: the problem being the awareness that people have of being separate from one another. This ‘separate, disunited existence [is] an unbearable prison’ (Fromm, 1995: 7) and one which must be overcome. Fromm (1995:8) suggests that the ‘deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness’. Achieving unity can be done in a number of ways: firstly, through reaching orgiastic states such as those aroused by drugs, alcohol and rituals of religion and/or sex. In primitive societies these were often group activities and so were socially acceptable, modern society no longer sanctifies group action oriented towards achieving orgiastic states in these ways and so these practices are often practiced alone and produce feelings of anxiety, guilt and shame in the individual. Fromm argues that although a sense of unity may be experienced it is only very transitory.

Secondly, Fromm suggests that the most frequent ‘solution’ of modern society is that of ‘conformity’. In order to feel a sense of unity with a group the individual often conforms to the group’s behaviours/attitudes. Equality, Fromm argues, has come to be associated with sameness (rather than oneness) and in an effort to remain part of the group individuality has been sacrificed – any individuality that remains (or appears to remain) is actually, for Fromm, an illusion. Conformity, often associated with the routinisation of activities, only provides a sort of pseudo-unity and so is an inadequate solution to the problem of separation. Finally, creative activity is suggested by Fromm as a way of

experiencing unity. Creative activity involves the planning, the production, and seeing the results of one's own work and is not dissimilar to Marx's ideas regarding productive labour as being part of man's species being. Unfortunately, modern society and a high division of labour do not promote productive work. Similarly productive work is only a partial answer to the problem of separation because it is not interpersonal. For Fromm it is *interpersonal fusion* that is the fundamental desire of humanity and is a necessity of society.

If the above 'solutions' provide only partial answers then what provides the actual solution? Fromm claims that *love* is the answer to the problem of separation: *but* not love as we think of it in modern society, and herein lies the problem for Fromm. Fromm identifies differences between 'mature love' and 'immature love'. Mature love involves a generalised love for all people and Fromm suggests that this is articulated best in the Christian commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. This type of love ('genuine love') involves a focus on giving not receiving, especially the giving of oneself – not out of sacrifice but out of joy. Fromm (1995: 16, italics in original) suggests that 'mature *love is union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality*' (c.f. Bauman, 2003). Loving for Fromm is an active rather than a passive process and in order to achieve mature love there are certain basic elements that must be present: care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. 'Care' involves labouring for something: 'one loves that for which one labours, and one labours for that which one loves' (Fromm: 1995: 22). Being 'responsible' for someone requires responding to them, again not out of duty but out of joy. The ability to see and accept someone *as they are* is the fundamental basis of 'respect' and is the only way to preserve their integrity and individuality. 'Knowledge', motivated by concern or care, is a

requisite of respect. 'Care, responsibility, respect and knowledge are mutually interdependent' (Fromm, 1995: 25) and for Fromm these are the ways that we 'do' love.

Fromm is one of the few theorists who articulates differences between 'types' of love. The types of love he identifies are: brotherly love, motherly love, erotic love, self-love, and the love of God. The most important of these, he claims, is brotherly love – generalised love for the other – because it is a non-exclusive love. Brotherly love is the recognition of humanity in all and is a love between equals, even when they are not equal in a given moment. Equality, then, derives not from sameness or the even distribution of power, but from a recognition that *all* people share in the experience of being people and that all have the same basic and fundamental need to transcend emotional separateness. It is on the basis of brotherly love that true social solidarity can be achieved. This is not dissimilar from ideas articulated by Weber, Simmel, Scheler and Bauman, who all suggest, in some way, that genuine love is an ethic/moral that provides the base for social solidarity.

Having articulated the necessity of love, Fromm then goes on to suggest why the practice of love is so difficult in modern society. Fromm suggests that love (as an art) requires discipline, concentration, patience and a supreme concern with the mastery of love in everyday life. Unfortunately, he suggests, these skills are missing in modern capitalist society. Modern man, he argues, is lazy (outside of work); concentration has become difficult in a society where life has become diffuse and unconcentrated; the individualised system of modernity has fostered a culture of speed which is antithetical to the quality/skill of patience; and life has become focused on the achievement of wealth, power, status and success rather

than on the mastery of love. Capitalist attitudes of consumerism have damaged the ability of the individual to love: both in the way that the individual conceptualises love – love in capitalist societies is only a kind of pseudo-love according to Fromm – and by devaluing the skills required to love fully and maturely.

‘It follows that the capacity to love in an individual living in any given culture depends on the influence this culture has on the character of the average person’

– Fromm, 1995: 65

Fromm is critical of capitalism because the economic market (rather than a shared moral order) has become the regulator of social life: people and things have become valuable only as exchangeable items because a capitalist society prioritises economic (market) goals and managerial bureaucracy (c.f. Weber, 1992). People living within this system have become automatons, motivated by mass suggestion – primarily the suggestion to produce and consume more ‘stuff’ (c.f. Bauman, 2008). Fromm maintains that the framework of existing society is antithetical to love because the *principles* of capitalism and love are incompatible (c.f. Bauman, 2003; Weber, 1991; Marx, 1975). In short, Fromm argues that in modern society ‘human love relations follow the same pattern of exchange which governs the commodity and labour market’ (Fromm, 1995: 3) – love has become focused on what the individual can get from the other, by ‘consuming’ relationships in the same way that they consume products. Fromm suggests that for love to become a social phenomenon (instead of an individual one) there needs to be a major change in the structure of society. For mature love to predominate ‘society must be organised in such a way that man’s social, loving nature is not separated from his social existence, but becomes one with it’ (Fromm, 1995: 104).

Discussions of love in classical social theorising all share a concern with possible connections between moral life, solidarity and loving. Weber's work, for example, appears to propose and advocate universal brotherly love as a means of resisting the impersonal structures of modernity (Symonds and Pudsey, 2007). Depersonalised love, then, can be seen as a moral action within Weber's theorising. Simmel's fragmentary writings on love can also be seen as advocating a similar principle. Bologh (1990: 1) is critical of this position, however, claiming that Weber's discussions of love (and his wider work in general) are 'masculine, masculinist and patriarchal'. She argues that Weber's theorising reproduces a social order which expresses and champions ideals associated with masculinity. Similar critiques have been levied at Simmel's work on women, suggesting that his analyses regarding the differences between men and women are inherently oppressive (Perper, 1985).

Bologh also suggests that Weber's theorising polarises love and accomplishment, associating accomplishment and action with the public sphere of men, and love with the private sphere of women. For Weber 'the world of greatness is a loveless world' and thus, Bologh claims, actions in life require making a choice between a feminine surrender to love or a masculine striving for greatness (Bologh, 1990: 15). For Weber the latter must always be preferred. Bologh argues that Weber's descriptions of certain types of love as being 'brotherly' are used deliberately in order to distance them from 'womanly love'. This is because brotherly love in Weber's work is compatible with action (and therefore also with accomplishment), whilst womanly love is passive and remains in tension with the public sphere. Bologh (1990) does not believe that there is anything inherently moral within Weber's writing on love because his ethic is an

ethic of impersonal loving which is principled only in the abstract. A truly moral love contains an ethic of personal love, which is characterised by a mutual responsiveness between persons and can thus be meaningful in action (Bologh, 1990).

Despite some apparent continuities between the thought of Weber, Simmel and Fromm, Fromm's discussions of 'brotherly love' do not propose it as a type of impersonal love. Brotherly love, within Fromm's writing, is universal but importantly it seeks to be responsible and care for the other, through knowledge of them. In this respect, then, 'brotherly love' is universally personal. Similar principles are found in Scheler's work on the different types of responsibility found within different social units. This aspect of Scheler's writing is discussed in subsequent chapters. Underpinning Scheler's work on the connections between love, responsibility and morality, however, is a Christian theology that Scheler both acknowledges and celebrates, arguing that Christian love is the only basis for genuine solidarity. Interestingly, principles associated with Judeo-Christian religions are given central importance within a number of classical discussions of love. Both Weber and Fromm argue that 'brotherly love' is born out of Judeo-Christian 'salvation' religions and their commands to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Unlike Scheler, who acknowledges his religious position, and Weber who is somewhat critical of religion, Erich Fromm appears happy to rely on Judeo-Christian precepts when describing 'genuine love', without affirming the validity of these precepts in relation to their theological foundations. Whilst this may not appear problematic initially, it places Fromm in a position where he is claiming that there *is* an objective love that exists outside of its socio-cultural conceptualisations, whilst simultaneously rejecting (or at least not affirming) the

creation of this genuine love by the Creator God found in Judeo-Christian religions. Fromm's work, then, does not adequately account for the genesis of a genuine love apart from theological categories. This is problematic for a wholly sociological understanding of love. This problem has been 'overcome' within many of the contemporary accounts of love, many of which do not claim that there is a 'genuine', objective love that exists outside of society.

Love in Contemporary Social Theorising

Contemporary social theorising has been much more explicit in its analysis of love with a number of authors dedicating specific works to the subject (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; Illouz, 2012; Kaufmann, 2011; Luhmann, 2012). Much of the contemporary writing about love is done so through an exploration of the ways in which the understandings and practices of love have changed over time.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Eva Illouz, for example, argue that love has changed most significantly as society has become more individualised. A similar account can be found within Bauman's work, though importantly, Bauman proposes that an individualised love is a mere 'copy' of 'genuine love' and this is a significant departure from Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Illouz's accounts. Giddens, Luhmann and Kaufmann describe the changes in love in relation to the structural and relational changes in society; the change from a traditional to a modern society has prompted a transformation of intimacy, as industrialisation has changed the nature of social and personal relationships. Aside from Bauman's claims that 'love' has both an objective essence and a social manifestation, much of the

contemporary literature points to the changes in the way love has been viewed over time, as being indicative of love's nature being one that is social and not something that is objectively 'real' outside of society and culture.

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Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995) provide an account of love that is grounded within their overall 'individualization thesis' (Smart, 2008). The individualization thesis (Beck, 1992) proposes that society has transformed in such a way that the individual, rather than the group, has become the central unit of social life. Traditional societies, they suggest, experienced solidarity primarily through community-based ties; a sense of social and personal stability arose from community bonds and obligations – the needs of the group *qua* group were of central importance, often over and above the needs of the specific individuals that made up the group (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Beck (1992) suggests that in the shift to modern, industrialised society the group has become less important, and often marginal, in comparison to the needs of the individual actor. He refers to this process as individualization. When individualization occurs social solidarity and personal stability no longer arise out of community ties. Instead, creating and experiencing a sense of stability has become the responsibility of the individual. Thus, in contrast to traditional societies these feelings are sought, not in the wider group but, in and through other individuals. Moreover, for the first time in history individuals are expected to direct their own lives, choices and are authors of their own *identities*. People are in control of their own life biographies and as such, personal responsibility has largely replaced communal responsibility.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) extend Beck's theorising not only to describe the way individualization has impacted emotional (love) lives generally,

but also posit that love is *the* modern way in which stability and solidarity is sought. This places love as being of central importance; love, they argue, has achieved a new significance 'as the very heart of our lives' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 46). Networks of support are now brokered through choice (of who we love) rather than compelled by obligation (to those in close geographical proximity and economic relations). Love relationships, they suggest, have become modernity's new secular religion (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). This is similar to Weber's proposal that devotion to God has been replaced by devotion to a person, through the vehicle of (erotic) love. Love, then, is not optional in modern society.

Unfortunately the 'modern' process of loving is not without difficulties. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995: 46) argue that the severing of traditional ties, which originally promised freedom from constraint and obligation, leaves people feeling less connected to one another and 'the support and security offered by a close-knit society begin[s] to disappear'. This general trend regarding all social relationships is intensified in relationship to intimate relationships, such as marriages. Having ceased to be organised by parents or family members for the purpose of economic stability, marital relationships have instead become the responsibility of those participating in the relationship – the basis of which is, ideally, love. Being in love, then, has become a solely individual endeavour – with the individual being responsible for all the choices they make in their love relationships, including who and what to love, and how to go about 'doing' this love. Love, they argue has become 'personal responsibility in its purest form' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 192).

This process of individualisation, regarding both life in general and love in particular, has not been a linear one and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim have traced three stages in the ways in which men and women have related to each other over time.

'In the first [stage], where the family consisted of an economic unit, neither partner had an individual biography. In the second, when the 'extended family' began to break up, the men were expected to take the initiative in organizing their own lives. ... [now] both sexes are faced with the blessings and burdens of making a life of their own'.

– Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 1995: 76

It is the 'blessings and burdens' of directing one's own life, alongside a 'modern concern with being ourselves' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 51), which leads to new problems associated with modern loving. Firstly, modern love is significantly less regulated than traditional relationships and there are, they contend, fewer expectations about what love is or how it should be done. They suggest that love 'cannot be organized' and thus its only place is within the hearts of those participating in it (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 177). More importantly, however, individualization in the context of intimate and personal relationships becomes problematic because it necessitates trying to balance one's 'self' (and one's own personal needs) at the same time as being part of a unit:

'The crux of the problem is finding a balance between being yourself and being part of a lasting togetherness with someone who is equally in search of his/her own self'.

– Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 77

Being two individual selves whilst being one unit of 'togetherness' is challenging because both people must strive to 'find', and potentially more importantly 'keep', themselves. Whereas relationships in traditional societies were characterised by

the notion that $1 + 1 = 1$; in modern society one plus one must simultaneously equal one *and* two.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's analysis suggests that because modern society values the 'self' more than 'togetherness', each person in a relationship primarily occupies the role of 'individual' rather than 'partner'; thus – in order to fulfil their own individual needs – each of them is considered to be free to leave the relationship at any time, without warning or obligation to stay. Love, they suggest, has therefore become elusive, difficult and permanently at risk, but one that nonetheless 'holds enormous fascination... finding it has [now] become an existential matter' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 190). Love is *the* mechanism by which 'person-related stability' operates and so close relationships have become precarious but at the same time are not optional. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim also suggest, however, that love with an intimate partner is not the only way in which person-related stability is found.

They argue that in a society where

'traditional bonds play only a minor role and the love between men and women has likewise proved vulnerable and prone to failure. What remains is the child. It promises a tie which is more elemental, profound and durable than any other in this society'.

– Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 73.

Having one's own children, they suggest, can provide the permanence that has previously been sought (and abandoned) in other relationships. Whilst other relationships are revocable, the one between parent and child is not; person-related stability has thus reached its apex for the parent who can focus their loving energies on a child. Parental love for a child, then, provides a new anchor for one's life. Regardless of whether love is focused on one's partner or one's child, however,

love is the mechanism of stability in modern Western society. It is the only way modern individuals experience 'community' because, for Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, love is the only place we can now go to for networks of support. Having a network also requires being a network and negotiating this type of community is challenging and risky.

Providing a similar account to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Eva Illouz (2012: 120) argues that in the context of an increasingly individualised society 'love provides a strong anchor' to an individual's sense of self. It has also, Illouz claims, become subject to 'affective individualism' and this, she suggests, has significantly increased emotional 'suffering', such that love and suffering have become inextricably linked in modern society (Illouz, 2012). Illouz's work on affective individualism examines the ways in which individuals seek recognition through social relationships of choice, whilst simultaneously being protective of the autonomy and freedom of individual thought and action. This paradox, she argues creates ontological insecurity because it is both difficult to achieve and an ongoing process that must be maintained.

Illouz (2012) proposes that love in modernity is characterised by the notion of choice. Choice, and the process of choosing, is not, however, a neutral processes – instead it is shaped by the culture we live within. She suggests that love in the modern world has undergone a 'great transformation', especially regarding the evaluation of a 'love object' (Illouz, 2012). Illouz argues that individuals in pre-modern societies evaluated love objects based on their 'character' or social persona and these were deeply embedded within communal moral frameworks. Modern evaluative criteria, however, focus on 'emotional intimacy and psychological compatibility ... and sexiness' (Illouz, 2012: 42) all of which have

become individualised and disembedded from social, moral frameworks. Notions of 'sexiness' in particular, she argues, have problematised love relationships by expanding the arena of choice of prospective mates.

Illouz does not deny that beauty and erotic attraction have been a part of love relationships throughout history. The change, she suggests, is that attraction has become 'an explicit, pervasive, and legitimate cultural category' in its own right (Illouz, 2012: 42); sexiness has become distinct from beauty through its codification in consumer culture. 'Sexiness' is a new and distinct category by which to confer status and evaluate individuals as prospective partners. Moreover, unlike social class and economic wealth – which are likely to share *some* connection, Illouz suggests – sexual attractiveness may be distinct from both of these evaluative categories. This has made making romantic choices increasingly problematic because of the potential conflict of attributes; romantic choices have now become a matter of individual 'taste'.

Using a Bourdieusian perspective, Illouz (2012) argues that an individual uses their 'romantic habitus', or ways of being and evaluating both self and others romantically, to compete with others in 'sexual fields' – social arenas in which sexual desire is autonomised. This, she claims, has given rise to a new form of 'erotic capital' that is played out in 'marriage markets'. Choosing a partner has therefore become disentangled from a normative and moral framework and is now individualised and characterised by its recourse to competition, consumption and values of the Market. This causes problems because intimate relationships are considered essential to modern life, primarily because being loved has become fundamental to one's sense of self-worth, yet they are undermined by capitalist obsessions with consumer practices and protecting profit.

Illouz also argues that modernity's obsession with selfhood as a perpetually changing thing has led to 'self-realisation' becoming mandatory. Despite individual autonomy and freedom being important cultural values, Illouz (2012: 114) argues that 'one's sense of self has to be performatively established in social relationships' and 'recognition' (by others) of one's self as 'worthy' is central to the modern self. The paradox is that individuals find themselves in a situation where they are mandated to 'become themselves' but must do so through relationships with others. These relationships, however, must not impinge on individual autonomy, and personal freedom must be maintained at all times; thus recognition and autonomy have to be continually renegotiated. This necessitates leaving all of one's options open and promises to another person thus become increasingly difficult to make; 'lovers' have become commitment phobic.

Much of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Illouz (2012) suggest with regards to the risky nature of love in contemporary society is found in Zygmunt Bauman's (2003) work, especially his commentary on love found in *Liquid Love*. Bauman's work similarly traces the ways in which individualisation and consumerism have impacted on the experience and practices of love and relationships. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Illouz and Bauman all appear to arrive at the same destination, their starting points are, however, very different. Unlike Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Illouz, Bauman provides *two* conceptualisations of love within his work: a description of 'genuine' love and a picture of 'love' as it exists within a consumer society. Bauman's description of the latter could appropriately borrow the term 'pseudo-love' from Fromm (1995: 65). Bauman (2003) argues that love in liquid modern society has become 'corrupted' by neo-liberal consumerist values. Bauman (2003: 5) argues that 'the tests an experience must

pass to be assigned as 'love' have eased – people have lowered their expectations. Much of Bauman's work, then, explores what he believes to be the nature of 'genuine' love; proposing that such love is far removed from the actual experiences of those who are presently living in a consumer society.

Bauman suggests that genuine love is an 'event' – it strikes spontaneously and in its own time, always arising out of nothingness. When we love we give of ourselves, joyfully and not dutifully. Love, for Bauman (2003: 9), is centrifugal – it is other-focused; it is 'the wish to care, and to preserve the object of care ... an impulse to expand, to go beyond'. Love expands the loved other by producing something that was not previously there. It also expands the loving self through giving itself away to the loved object. Love is productive (c.f. Scheler, 1992). Bauman compares Love with other ways of relating with one another: that of 'Desiring' and of 'Wishing for'. Wishing for is speedy and momentary and close to what we think of as physically 'desiring' the other; wishing involves a momentary craving for the other person. Desire, as Bauman describes it, longs for the other with the wish to consume them. It is self-focused, centripetal in its sphere of action. Whilst love holds on, desiring to protect and serve the beloved, Desire uses the other to meet its own needs; it consumes others and then discards them; Love is, according to Bauman uncertain and risky: uncertain because the productive nature of love means that it does not know what it is going to create; Love is also risky because through its protective urge it has the potential to become Desire through a too-tight grip on the other. Bauman agrees with Fromm that to love requires humility and courage. Unlike Fromm, however, Bauman argues that one cannot learn how to love; rather it strikes in its own time. Nonetheless Bauman and

Fromm's characterisations of love are similar, especially regarding their ideas about love and responsibility.

For Bauman, responsibility and care are inextricably linked and are concerned with the desire and ability to respond to the other and be accountable for their wellbeing. It is through the enactment of these concepts that one loves the other. Practically this is achieved through the process of talking with and listening attentively to the other, with interest and with a readiness to respond. Active and attentive listening communicates to the other that they are worthy and valuable. Genuine interest communicates that the other's uniqueness contributes to the world and that what they say matters; they learn that they are irreplaceable and they feel loved. Being responsible for the other necessitates maintaining their dignity and protecting their humanity. Because 'loving' is about responding to the other, there are no invariable rules that can be learned habitually over time.

Bauman does not believe that modern society characterises love in this way. One of the central themes of both *Liquid Love* and within Bauman's larger corpus of work is his frequent 'moral condemnation of consumer practices' (Davis, 2008: 5). Specifically, Bauman's writings on love suggest that liberalism as a 'style of thought' (Davis, 2008: 5) has transformed the way people think about and do love, by introducing consumer ideals into our emotional vocabulary. He argues that much of what is constituted to be 'love' in contemporary society is actually misnamed-Desire. What has come to be constituted as love, then, has been damaged by a neo-liberalist consumer culture in which people, products and values have become increasingly commodified. People have become like objects *to us*, rather than us being subject *to them*, through the acceptance of our responsibility *for them*.

Bauman (2003: viii) argues that modern men and women are 'yearning for the security of togetherness' such that relationships are at the top of our life-political agendas (c.f. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Capitalist society, however, promotes – though Bauman queries whether it in fact *demands* – autonomy and personal freedom. Individuals find themselves in the paradoxical situation where they are desperate to relate to one another, but afraid of 'being related' for fear of losing their freedom. Relationships have necessarily changed to accommodate the anxieties of the men and women who engage in them: the 'pure relationship – that is, a relationship without ties – has become the 'prevailing form of human togetherness today' (Bauman, 2003: 89). If liberty makes relationships 'pure', it is commitments, according to Bauman that make modern relationships impure; people are instead searching for and making 'connections'. Connections are more frequent but shallower, much briefer but more intense than commitments and they are attractive because they are less risky. Being committed to the other means giving oneself to the other and requires the self to become vulnerable; thus 'being connected' is less costly for the self than 'being committed', but it is also 'considerably less productive in terms of bond building and bond maintenance' (Bauman, 2003: 63).

An increase in connections, rather than commitments has led to an erosion of the moral economy, where bonds and commitments are forged and strengthened through the practice of love, care and responsibility. Like Fromm, Bauman too describes the ways in which capitalist society has deskilled its members in the competences required for love. Love requires humility and courage, patience and steadfastness; capitalism requires self-interestedness, fear of exclusion, impatience and capriciousness. The prevailing values and attitudes

that regulate the market economy have infected the moral economy and 'love' is a product to be consumed like any other (Bauman, 2003). Long-term relationships are, Bauman claims, treated like stock investments in which a profit is expected; relationships are perpetually uncertain because each partner has the right to 'sell their shares' when the risk of low returns looks likely. As with every other aspect of consumer life, partnerships have thus, according to Bauman, become disposable (c.f. Kaufmann, 2011). Relationships are no longer forged out of love, but out of desire – individuals 'consume' the other until satisfaction is attained or until dissatisfaction sets in.

Partnerships have become consumable products and are now eminently 'disposable' – no longer does love mean 'til death do us part'; instead people operate on the basis of love 'for now'. The consequences of this attitude are, for Bauman, a great loss for humanity. Love relationships exist in a perpetual state of uncertainty and human bonds have consequently become 'frail'. This, Bauman suggests, has clear implications, not only for interpersonal relationships – individuals experience personal anxiety, fear and uncertainty, for example – but for human solidarity as a whole. Bauman (2003: 76) believes that love provides the basis for human bonds, but that human solidarity has become 'the first casualty of the triumphs of the consumer market'.

Anthony Giddens (1992; 1991) shares a remarkably similar view to Bauman regarding the self-interested nature of love in modern society. Importantly, however, Giddens is not critical of self-interested love; rather he celebrates this self-interest as 'progress'. Giddens' discussions of love are most thorough in his text *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992). Much of this book focuses on issues of sexuality rather than love proper and Giddens consistently

relates love to sexuality and vice versa; his focus remains almost exclusively on couple relationships. Much of his theorising explores the varying ways that 'love' have been conceptualised over time. It is through this examination that Giddens arrives at his concept of the 'pure relationship' as characteristic of the new form of loving in late modernity.

According to Giddens (1992) 'passionate love' is a universal phenomenon, being present in almost all cultures throughout history. Passionate love is characterised by a connection between feelings of love and sexual attachment to and for the other. It has a 'quality of enchantment' in that it involves an urgent desire for the other which sets it apart from the banality of everyday life (Giddens, 1992: 38). According to Giddens passionate love can cause people to abandon everyday responsibilities, and can therefore be viewed as both antithetical to lasting marriage and dangerous to the social order³. Giddens (1992) argues that, whilst being an ever-present idea in society, it is unlikely that passionate love was ever, or will ever, be the basis of lasting relationships. Instead, pre-modern societies – certainly within agrarian communities – organised marital unions for economic and labour purposes; marriage (as an enduring relationship) was a contractual arrangement in which 'love', if it existed at all, was 'companionate' – characterised by a mutual responsibility for both the home and the means of survival. According to Giddens, 'companionate love' dominated the expectations of feelings associated with partner relationships until the Eighteenth century. At this point society, he suggests, moved towards 'rational thought' as an orientation to the world and this, accompanied by an increasing division of labour, transformed

³ Perhaps Bauman (2001) would characterise 'passionate love' not as love at all but as 'Desire'? If this were the case then both would seem to be suggesting that this type of emotional relationship is damaging to social bonds.

companionate love to 'romantic love'. Unlike companionate love, romantic love was associated not with shared responsibilities, but with culture.

Giddens argues that romantic love introduced the notion of a 'narrative' into interpersonal relationships, and in fact that one meaning of 'romance' is as 'story-telling'. Although immediate attraction was thought to be a part of romantic love this was not the erotic compulsion of passionate love. Instead love was expected to 'develop' along culturally-coded 'story-lines' and it was these narratives, rather than feelings per se, that drove romantic love behaviour. During this time, alongside physical work, sexuality became increasingly subject to ever greater divisions of labour. Sexual and romantic roles became separate for men and women and sexuality and love were also seen, increasingly, as being separate spheres. Women within romantic love relationships became progressively more tied to domesticity and it was in this period that ideals of 'chaste women' arose (Giddens, 1992). Therefore, although sexuality was still of great import, it was somewhat separated from romantic love and became ever more gendered: within narratives of romantic love women were permitted to 'access' sex through the 'proper' channel of marriage, whilst men were able to extend their sphere of sexuality by engaging in extramarital affairs. On the one hand women became gradually more controlled through narratives of 'appropriate' sexuality, with sexuality being viewed as secondary to 'being loved' romantically (as a passive participant); on the other hand men were more able to operate through libertarian narratives of sexuality as a way of romantically loving (as active participants). Giddens does note that in practice this was mediated through relations of power but suggests that as a view it permeated most partnership relationships.

Although Giddens notes that romantic love was heavily imbalanced in relation to gender, he simultaneously rejects the idea that it was an ideology created by men in order to control women. He also notes that it is imbalanced in its almost exclusive orientation towards heterosexuality and these issues are a huge point of departure between romantic love and what Giddens calls 'confluent love' (Giddens, 1992; 1991). According to Giddens confluent love has become increasingly dominant and is a key feature of the 'pure relationship'. A pure relationship is one that is entered into and remained within, whilst it is beneficial for both parties; it is characterised by the attitude 'until further notice' and is free from obligation (Giddens, 1992: 63). According to Giddens the pure relationship has become increasingly common in contemporary society.

For Giddens, confluent love is both active and contingent, presuming 'equality in emotional give and take', and within the relationship love only ever develops to the extent that intimacy does (Giddens, 1992: 62). Gendered divisions of labour are no longer defining features of (confluent) love and mutual sexual satisfaction is considered to be inherent within this type of love relationship – although sexual exclusiveness, unlike romantic love, is no longer considered a vital element unless so desired by both parties. Similarly, confluent love has no specific link to heterosexuality; for Giddens, sexuality is negotiated within the relationship rather than by and through culture. Confluent love involves less of a desire for 'forever'. People now search not for the right person but for the right relationship, allowing people to 'move on' if the relationship fails to meet expectations. Giddens cites increasing divorce rates in society as evidence of this feature of confluent love, arguing that they are a consequence (rather than a cause) of the emergence of confluent love.

Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2011) and Niklas Luhmann (2012[1986]) both undertake a similar theoretical project to Giddens. Their analyses begin with an examination of the transformation of ideas about love through time. Luhmann's interest appears to be in the 'mechanics' of the transformations, whilst Kaufmann is interested in the consequences of these changes for individual and social relationships. Like Giddens, Kaufmann concludes that relationships are entered and left more freely now than in the past. His analysis of this is much less positive than Giddens', however, and like Bauman, he concludes that relationships in contemporary society are 'disposable'. Like Giddens, Kaufmann (2011: 34) claims that 'love has always preoccupied the hearts and minds of the people of all civilizations'. Nevertheless, Kaufmann proposes that love has undergone significant transformations over time. He argues that such transformation was most intense during the twelfth century, during which the relationship between society and the individual altered dramatically.

Kaufmann argues that one can discern the most about the structure of a society by evaluating how that society responds to moral questions – who guides matters of morality? Who is responsible for the solution to problems? Kaufmann suggests that in traditional, or holistic, societies the answers to moral questions came from and through the collective; a problem for one was a problem for all. Moral beliefs and behaviours were guided by (predominantly) religious values that had an overriding concern for the group. 'Community' was the focus of this type of society. Conversely, modern society has become increasingly individualised; problems are an individual's own and they are responsible for providing the solutions. Questions of right and wrong, then, are guided, not by group standards, but by an individual conscience (Kaufmann, 2011).

This transformation was important for love because it radically changed the nature of social bonds. According to Kaufmann (2011: 46) 'love produces bonds' by 'binding [individuals] to other individuals' – it follows, therefore, that different models of love form different social bonds. In traditional, holistic societies love was practised following a Christian *agape* model of love which focused on unconditional love for persons *qua* persons (Kaufmann, 2011). The principle of 'loving one's neighbour as yourself' was a guiding one; producing bonds between people that were mandated by an *agape* love that was calm, altruistically generous and universalist. The twelfth century saw the creation and rise of the autonomous individual and this changed 'the rules of the social game' (Kaufmann, 2011). Modern society demands individuals *choose* their communities and their 'neighbours'; perhaps, more importantly it also demands that individuals keep on choosing. This means that, for Kaufmann (2011: 37), 'the social bond has become elective, even when it comes to love, and this greatly complicates things.' This type of love focuses on individual feelings of love (towards other individuals), rather than generalised 'doings' of love towards all others universally. Passionate love and *agape*, as models of love, exist in tension with one another. Kaufmann argues that love as we know it today is a result of the historical battles between them.

The Enlightenment and the rise of Reason came to view individuals as calculating and social bonds as being calculated through rational thought. During this time *agape* was replaced with the secular concept of benevolence – with the hope that this could forge the social bond - and love was diverted to the private sphere as something of a consolation for a social sphere based on reason and rationality. Kaufmann suggests that as the market economy grew and started to regulate society, individuals came to be seen as increasingly self-interested and

callous. Radical romanticism and passionate (that is individualised) love acted as supports to resist such change – ‘the romantic impulse was a reaction against the coldness of Reason’ (Kaufmann, 2011: 65). The competition and calculation of modern life has led to an ever increased demand for love, but the autonomous individuals of advanced modernity also create ever increasing problems.

Proposing a similar argument to Bauman (2001) and Illouz (2012), Kaufmann suggests that modern consumer society has made choice an imperative and at the same time has made ‘not being happy intolerable’ (Kaufmann, 2011:111). Relationships, he argues, are built upon a contradictory dream; to be *with* someone and to be independent. Our desire to be with someone – in a love relationship – stems from a demand for ‘recognition’ (c.f. Illouz, 2012). Kaufmann (2011: 112) argues that recognition is significantly lacking in our society because we live in a ‘system of generalized competition’ that leads us to continually judge and criticise each other. Being loved by another person, he argues, masks our desire for wider recognition. Thus modern relationships are built upon a desire and expectation of ‘reciprocal recognition’ and mutual trust. Unfortunately, however, the demand for autonomy, alongside a claim for individual happiness, undermines relationships: partners have become ‘associates’ and relationships have become ‘disposable’ (Kaufmann, 2011: 111).

Niklas Luhmann’s (2012[1986]) book *Love as Passion* also traces love’s historical changes, exploring the ways in which love has been codified over time. Love is, for Luhmann, a code or medium of communication, rather than a feeling per se. That is not to say that feelings are not involved in loving, rather feelings come about according to the ‘content’ of particular codifications in any given time or culture (Luhmann, 2012). Love is a ‘code of communication,

according to which one can express, form and simulate feelings' (Luhmann, 2012: 20, emphasis added). Luhmann's work attempts to identify and outline the ways in which the code of love has changed over time. That being said, he does not believe that identifying different epochs is straightforward, primarily because there are no clear pauses or boundaries from which one could say that one epoch/code ends and another begins. Neither can change be traced through exploring the introduction of new ideas, rather it may be existing ideas gaining a newly centralised position that characterises the transition from one code to another. It is these 'distinct shifts in emphasis' (Luhmann, 2012: 42) that Luhmann is concerned to understand.

Love within a medieval society was, for example, concerned with avoiding the 'vulgar' aspects of love and thus sensuality and sexuality were marginalised; love became idealised. The idealisation of love was necessary because it better fitted with increasing social stratification occurring within medieval society (Luhmann, 2012). Idealisation gave way, however, to 'paradoxicalization' which then later transformed love into a form of 'reflection of autonomy'. These codified forms changed how love was expressed and required people to 'participate' in love in different ways. Sexuality, for example, transitioned from being wholly separate to love, to being incorporated into love, to love itself being 'nothing other than the ideal expression and systematization of the sexual drive' (Luhmann, 2012: 45). This had repercussions for the structuring of intimate relationships. The desire to separate love from sensuality within idealized forms of love meant that the proper location for love was outside of marriage, whilst the transition to paradoxical love saw love transition to within marriage. Eventually, Luhmann argues, marriage itself was transformed. Love in modern society, a society characterised

'autonomization', created a new situation and one in which communal living is uncommon and thus 'external supports are dismantled' (Luhmann, 2012: 156). A sense of stability is now a personal endeavour and one that is dependent upon personal resources (c.f. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

Within all of these contemporary accounts of love are similar analyses regarding the ways that love has become an individual 'task'. Theorists like Giddens argue that such a process towards individualising love has resulted in personal liberation. His critics, however, warn him not be too forceful in stating new freedoms for individuals in intimate relationships because 'much of personal life remains structured by inequalities' (Jamieson, 1999: 477). Jamieson (1998) suggests that Giddens' theories are overly optimistic, especially regarding gender equality. She suggests that men still have more power than women, especially in their choice to participate (or not) in domestic work, childcare and the control of money. Likewise, Duncombe and Marsden's (1993) work suggests that the *appearance* of equality is illusory and is an achievement of the emotional work done by women. Jamieson argues that their work undermines Giddens' claims regarding greater equality in heterosexual relationships. She also suggests that Giddens overstates the extent to which sexuality is 'plastic' and negotiated between couple, arguing that empirical data indicates that most couples in the UK are exclusively heterosexual (Jamieson, 1999). Jamieson (1999: 485) also criticises Giddens for unproblematically assuming that 'a good relationship will be equal and intimate'.

Mulinari and Sandell (2009) likewise critique Giddens' work by suggesting that he misrepresents the extent to which gender inequality is being overcome. Their critique centres on both Giddens' and Beck's work as examples of theories of

late modernity, which they argue fail to adequately theorise or account for gender at all. Mulinari and Sandell (2009: 494) propose that social life comes into being through 'the doing[s] of actual people in specific locations'. Social divisions are therefore, in their account, at the core of sociology – yet it is absent from Beck and Giddens' work on late modernity. Specifically Mulinari and Sandell argue that gender is an important social division and one that is largely ignored within most late modern analyses.

They argue that theories of late modernity, exemplified by Giddens' and Beck's work, reproduce ideas about the (gendered) separation of the public and private spheres and maintain the 'sociological assumptions about the "natural" location of family and women' (Mulinari and Sandell, 2009: 496). They criticise Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim for obscuring state power, which is both patriarchal and racialised, and for naturalising the boundaries between the private and the public. Ultimately Mulinari and Sandell argue that 'Giddens and Beck ... are preoccupied with actively writing away patriarchy though reinscribing a specific (idealized) form of heterosexual relationship as the model for democracy and equality'. This, they claim, is the promotion of a politics of violence. Because Beck's and Giddens' work regarding late modernity is so fundamentally flawed, their analyses of gendered relations, interpersonal relationships and love, are not only inaccurate but reproduce ideological inequalities within an through intimate life (Mulinari and Sandell, 2009).

Interestingly, Mulinari and Sandell's analysis of late modern theorising does not include Bauman's work, despite the fact that there are continuities between his writing and Beck's and Giddens', especially regarding a trend towards individualisation. Moreover, despite there being a literature challenging and

critiquing Bauman's theorising⁴, very little has been said about his writings on love. Nonetheless the philosophical and implicitly theological bases of Bauman's characterisations of love are possible lines of critique, an observation made by Flanagan (2010) about Bauman's wider work. Like Fromm, Bauman's work does not account for the genesis of 'genuine' love when he proposes it exists. Moreover, much of Bauman's writings on love and morality are reliant on the philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas and Knud Logstrup (Larsen, 2014), both of whom theorise God at the heart of morality and ethical demands.

Love and Feminism

As noted, much of the analysis so far has made an implicit assumption that all 'individuals' are affected by social ideas of love in the same way. A number of feminist accounts also explore the relationship between the concept of love and the organisation of society but do so with recourse to the gendered ways in which this relationship is played out in the lives of individuals. The works of Jackson (1993), Langford (1999), Greer (2006)⁵ and Firestone (1970) will be discussed, as

⁴ Writers such as Blackshaw, Campaign, Carleheden, Crone, Davis, Hviid Jacobsen, Junge, Marshman, Mansson and Poder have all contributed to a book (Hviid Jacobsen and Poder, 2008) dedicated to challenging and critiquing Bauman's work, alongside their own theoretical work that draws on and departs from Bauman's.

⁵ Germaine Greer (2006), although not a sociologist, writes a detailed and sustained critique of love in contemporary society. She differentiates between what can be described as 'real' love and 'real-life' love, the latter of which is based on societal factors and structures. In this regard her analysis is similar to Erich Fromm and Zygmunt Bauman's. Likewise, she too suggests that 'real' love is the basis for social solidarity, a particularly sociological concern; for these reasons she is included in these sociological discussions.

although united in their ideas about gender inequality changing the nature of love for men and women, their views also differ in notable ways. All agree that 'doing love' requires a level of emotional competency, for example, but whilst theorists such as Jackson, Duncombe and Marsden, Firestone believe that modern ways of doing love deskills men, some theorists such as Greer and Safilios-Rothschild argue that women are now incapable of loving.

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In her article *Even Sociologists Fall In Love* (1993) Stevi Jackson proposes that love has been treated by many disciplines (including Sociology) as an asocial, 'essential' and universally experienced emotion. Arguing against such a position, she emphasising the *gendered* nature of love and the ways in which love is shaped by social and cultural processes. Jackson (1993: 207) suggests that there is

'no way of exploring love except in the ways it is talked and written about. Language itself, moreover, contributes to the cultural construction of emotions and is a means by which we participate in creating a shared sense of what emotions are'.

Love, then, for Jackson is a set of discourses which individuals actively draw upon to understand their own feelings and relationships. She then argues that society discursively constructs *gender-specific* subject-positions. Focusing on culture, specifically the culture of 'romance', Jackson argues that women and men learn dramatically different romantic narratives, resulting in them having radically different experiences of love.

According to Jackson, a dominant masculinity – in which men are viewed as being less emotional – results in men being unable to manipulate romance narratives or wider discourses of emotion. Consequently, she argues, men often distance themselves from their emotions and women frequently experience men

as 'emotionally illiterate', a proposition supported by Duncombe and Marden's (1993) work, whose empirical findings indicate this to be the case. Jackson maintains that both men and women have access to emotion narratives but that boys and men are not encouraged to develop competency in using them. This not only leads to women and men experiencing love differently, but generates conflict between men and women due to varying levels of competency within a seemingly shared emotional experience. Jackson does emphasise, however, that what remains common in the experiences of both men and women, is the process by which all individuals come to see themselves as emotional beings through their active engagement with culture.

Wendy Langford (1999) similarly represents love as a cultural experience, in which, she argues, women construct themselves as the heroines of romantic narratives (Ingraham, 2001). Although similar in their emphasis on 'romance', Langford's commentary focuses almost exclusively on women (whereas Jackson also discusses ideas surrounding masculinity and the construction of gender-specific subjects). Langford suggests that women draw on cultural constructions of romance and true love, which despite promising egalitarian relationships with men, fail to deliver this in reality. Moreover, the romantic narratives constructed by women actually obscure the gendered relations of power within the relationships.

Langford (1999: xi) argues that romantic love has become the predominant basis of domestic and social life, but suggests that this may not be as 'liberating and beneficial' as we assume. She contends that society holds a view of love as a 'private domain in which humanity thrives' (Langford, 1999: xii), that somehow provides a 'refuge' from a competitive and alienating public sphere, an idea also

evident within social theory (Kaufmann, 2011; Weber, 1991). Langford maintains, however, that 'private' life is determined by the exercise of power; 'love', having reached 'unprecedented meaning' in our private lives, actually helps to underpin an inhumane, unequal and unjust society. In agreement with Jackson (1993), Langford argues that women experience love differently to men, but do so by actively constructing their own romantic narratives in which they are the 'heroines'.

In similar ways Duncombe and Marsden's (1993) work is also concerned with theorising how gendered relations of power operate within the private sphere. They use the work of Arlie Hochschild's to explore and understand the ways in which emotion is 'done' in relationships, rather than just merely felt as an emotional state. They use Hochschild's ideas on the existence of feeling and display rules which guide both emotional experience and their expression. This 'doing' of emotion in the context of such rules is labelled 'emotion work'. Duncombe and Marsden explore differences in the doing of emotion work within their studies of the family and the emotional relationship between men and women in couple partnerships. As a starting point they note that, despite increasing scholarly interest in 'the family', little account has been taken of the role of emotion in intimate family life. Whilst researching economic issues such as household finances, the division of household labour and childrearing is important, if love and emotion are not theorised a 'powerful emotional component is missing' (Duncombe and Marden, 1993: 225) – they even go so far as to suggest that emotion is often the *basis* of the household division of labour and/or finances and should therefore be considered of central importance.

Within their research Duncombe and Marsden set out to explore the different ways in which men and women conceive of love and intimacy in their personal relationships. Their study proceeded with the hypothesis that the 'emotion work' of a relationship is primarily the job of women. Like Jackson, they argue that men and women have different emotional competencies and that this difference in willingness and ability to 'make the emotional effort' to sustain an intimate relationship, leads to conflict between the two parties. Duncombe and Marsden suggest that women desire emotional intimacy to a greater extent than their male partners and at the same time men are less able to deliver such intimacy. Their research data suggests that the women participating in the study felt like their male partners did not (and sometimes could not) participate fully in the emotional aspects of the relationship. The consequences of the emotional asymmetry in the relationship left women feeling like they are not loved, valued or understood, whilst men considered their partners 'unreasonable, undermining and basically disloyal or even threatening' (Duncombe and Marsden, 1993: 228).

Love, then, within Duncombe and Marsden's work is something that is experienced and expressed differently by men and women. Any intimacy that exists at the beginning of a relationship is at risk of being eroded away by the imbalance of both expectations regarding emotional participation, and the asymmetry of the actual participation in the relationship. The demand on women to 'do' more 'emotion work' is created and maintained by a culture that deskills men emotionally. Despite the fact that there has been a cultural shift towards greater equality in relationships, especially with regards emotional fulfilment, the degree to which this equality is actually *experienced* is questionable. Duncombe and Marsden, then, warn theorists such as Giddens (1992; 1991) not to overstate

the extent to which relationships are 'pure'. They argue that their research demonstrates that whilst people may *appear* to experience confluent 'love for its own sake', it is in fact a 'smokescreen' that has to be perpetually performed; moreover, the responsibility for this performance is unequally distributed and the burden of the work of this presentation is endured by women.

In a move away from other feminist literature on love, which proposes that love is a social construct that is mediated by gendered imbalances of power, Germaine Greer differentiates between 'ideal' love and love as it is manifest in society. She argues that the essence of (ideal) love is to be mutual, based on understanding, trust and commonality. For Greer (2006: 158), love of this type forms communities and is the 'only foundation for viable social structures', as it is the manifestation of common good. Therefore love *proper* is the basis of society. Ideal love then remains in tension with the State, which, she argues, can bring harmony only through external discipline and is based upon serving the common (and irreconcilable) needs of disparate communities and minorities. Social experiences of love are mediated by social structures such as the state and thus, love as it is manifest in society bears little resemblance to 'ideal love' (Greer, 2006).

According to Greer human (ideal) love is a function of narcissism – we love those like ourselves, and herein lies great potential; recognising our self in the other allows individuals and group bonds to form, thus providing the basis of society. In modern society, however, Greer suggests that love has become increasingly focused on one other person (rather than many others) and so is increasingly individualised and egotistic; love has become a socially sanctioned form of egotism (Greer, 2006). Greer suggests that the collection of sentimentally

significant objects and rituals surrounding love is part of the mutual egotism of love. Similarly Eva Illouz (2012) argues that loving someone involves engaging in a process of ritual reassurance, in order to counteract the insecurity inherent in modern love relationships. Greer also argues that love cannot exist between inferior and superior persons and therefore the continual oppression of women means that 'women cannot love' (Greer, 2006: 160).

Greer posits that men love themselves and all others like them, but conversely, women do not feel joy in seeing themselves (nor in seeing other women), instead recognising them as 'weak and unsuitable' (Greer, 2006: 160). 'Ideal' love exists between men (though society does not call it love, instead labelling it 'male bonding'), whereas the behaviour we associate with love is often 'so far from benevolence, and so anti-social, that it must be understood to be inimical to the essential nature of love' (Greer, 2006: 167). By this Greer appears to be suggesting that behaviour that we *label* as 'love' in contemporary Western society, is hugely detached from what love 'really is' – an emotion based on mutuality, trust and understanding (Greer, 2006). Similar arguments are found in the works of Fromm (1995) and Bauman (2003). Furthermore, Greer notes that to the extent that any behaviour in contemporary society can even be termed 'love', this is something that men and women do very differently. Nonetheless, rather than providing a sustained critique of love itself (as contributing to or causing women's oppression), Greer provides an argument that suggests a potentially more hopeful feminist account: [Ideal] love itself is not the problem *per se*; rather the societal conditions in which the status of women is heavily compromised causes love to be experienced in an 'unhealthy' way. Thus inadequacies of love are the consequences of gender inequalities, rather than the cause of them.

Shulamith Firestone (1970) argues, on the other hand, that love is 'the pivot of women's oppression today' (Firestone, 1970: 121). Firestone argues that love has never been properly understood, rather it has been experienced and that experience has been communicated. Unlike writers, such as Jackson (1993) and Johnson (2005), who have accounted for a lack of understanding of love because of its indescribability, Firestone suggests that an examination of love actually threatens our culture. For Firestone, women 'live for love' whilst men 'live for work' and the love of women (towards men), she argues, has enabled the creation of (male) culture. She suggests that men need love and emotional support in order to 'create great culture' and that this comes from women, but always at their expense. Thus for Firestone, examining love threatens the 'great culture' and the legitimacy of that culture as male-led.

In a similar way to Greer, Firestone (1970: 124) differentiates between 'love' and 'love in our present society', arguing that 'love is a simple phenomenon but has become corrupted by unequal balance of power'. She suggests that although love appears at first to be altruistic, it is actually the height of selfishness; according to Firestone the lover only and always demonstrates to the beloved how they would like to be treated, and that all action arises out of a desire to 'take over' the other person. If this is experienced as a mutual vulnerability – an exchange of selves – then this can be an incredibly satisfying experience; women's inequality within society rarely allows for this to occur, however, and this results in 'romantic love' (love between the sexes) being conflated with real love, which is characterised by reciprocity. It is a division similar to that found in Bauman's (2003) commentary on the differences between Love and Desire, albeit with a gendered dimension. Unlike Bauman, however, Firestone suggests that the

consequence of romantic love/Desire dominating social expectations of love, results in women using love relationships to validate their existence, whilst leaving men *incapable* of loving.

Alongside Greer and Firestone, Safilios-Rothschild (1977) similarly argues that structural factors within society have differentially affected the ability of men and women to experience love. Safilios-Rothschild (1977) suggests that men and women occupy 'drastically unequal' positions in society. Women, she argues, because of their disadvantaged and inferior position in society, cannot experience mature and fulfilling love. Instead, in order to achieve psychological and economic security, women must concentrate on securing men's approval, love and lust. Unfortunately this process results in women experiencing a 'loss of self' and with this the ability to love. She argues that there is a fundamental 'incompatibility of traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity with the idea of love as an intimate, rewarding human relationship' (Safilios-Rothschild, 1977: 54). Safilios-Rothschild also suggests that in the future people will want to experience love and intimacy as togetherness, but will fear associated possessiveness. Quoting Bengis she argues, '[people] want to be free and committed at the same time' (Bengis, 1972 in Safilios-Rothschild, 1977: 100), and this, she suggests, will lead to men and women being 'afraid to love'. As noted, a number of authors argue that such predictions have already become manifest in contemporary society (Illouz, 2012; Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

These accounts of love share a common theme – experiences of love vary for men and women and cultural constructions of love are patterned according to gender. Whilst this body of literature addresses one 'gap' missing in theorising elsewhere – gender – there is little discussion of the ways in which experiences of

love may be mediated along other lines of identity, such as sexuality, ethnicity or cultural differences. One could criticise feminist analyses for focusing too much on gender as a point of difference regarding the ways in which different people love differently. Moreover, Daniel Miller (2008) contends that when starting research from a position of exploring a phenomenon from a particular position, i.e. gender, it is hard not to find it. Miller suggests that aspects of difference should emerge from empirical data and should not be a starting point for research. On this basis feminist analyses 'look' for love and find it, thereby confirming their initial position. That is not to say that gendered divisions are irrelevant when looking at love; rather, starting from a position where it is assumed to be relevant *may* obscure any other aspects of difference that are chiefly relevant. This was one of the reasons why the research undertaken within this study did not start from a position in which one aspect of identity was more important than any other.

Conclusions

Although many have claimed that 'love' represents a theoretical lacuna in sociology (Luhmann, 2012; Smart, 2008; Johnson, 2005; Langford, 1999; Jackson, 1993; Reiss, 1960), there *is* a body of work that has sought to explain the relationship between love and society. There is, for example, a sociological literature that has suggested that love is a phenomenon that binds people together with others and is thus the proper basis of social solidarity (Kaufmann, 2011; Greer, 2006; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Simmel, 1984; Scheler, 1973). Some of these authors claim that love in whatever form it takes has this ability, whilst theorists such as Fromm, Bauman and Greer emphasise the potentiality of this, achieved only when social understandings of love correspond to 'genuine' love.

Other theorists have argued that love has changed as society has. Individualisation and detraditionalisation have caused social bonds to become more elective and thus more elusive (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991), though no less important. In fact, some argue that love is more central in our lives than ever before (Illouz, 2012; Kaufmann, 2011; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). There is some agreement about what this individualised and detraditionalised love looks like. Common to most accounts of love is the premise that love, along with society more generally, has become and is becoming increasingly focused on the individual self as the primary social unit. Within intimate relationships this is expressed through greater personal responsibility for the relationship choices people make, and a greater focus on the individual qualities of particular others when seeking to make these choices about who to love (Illouz, 2012; Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991;).

Whilst there may be some agreement on the process of change regarding love relationships, there is much disagreement on the consequences of these changes. It is interesting to note, for example, that Giddens (1992) and Bauman (2003) provide remarkably similar accounts regarding the 'easy' way in which people enter into and leave relationships. Bauman, however, takes a much more critical stance to such a situation, arguing that this is the result of increasing commodification of love in a consumer society, rather than Giddens' proposal that it is the result of a greater level of equality between partners. Bauman makes explicit what remains implicit in Giddens' work: that consumer values have become so embedded in our lives that they now impact upon our most intimate relationships. Giddens' work on sexuality and love suggests that greater choice and

freedom to leave relationships is a positive step towards greater autonomy and freedom. This position can be viewed, and critiqued, on the basis that it is underpinned by neoliberal values of individualisation, consumer choice and efficiency – in short the values of the market. In this way we might view Giddens' work as political and ideological, promoting the extension of the market into our personal lives, or to borrow from Habermas (1987, 1984), promoting the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system. Despite much continuity between their work, then, the main point of departure between Giddens and Bauman is their evaluation of the situation: whilst Giddens argues we are gaining something great (freedom to choose), Bauman believes that we are losing something precious (genuine love).

Similarly, whilst Marx, Bauman and Fromm suggest that capitalism has altered the ability of *everyone* to love, Greer and Safilios-Rothschild argue that gendered power relationships mean that women cannot love and Firestone argues that it is now men who lack this ability, with Jackson and Duncombe and Marsden agreeing that men have become increasingly deskilled in loving. Likewise Simmel, Fromm and Scheler all argue that love is a capacity of the individual. Yet Simmel argues that it is a spontaneous 'psychic act', Fromm proposes that it is an 'art' that requires mastery over time, whilst Scheler's work theorises that love is an 'act of consciousness'; the most fundamental act involved in perceiving the world around us. Despite differences, however, there are common theoretical threads that connect the writings presented in this chapter. There is some agreement, for example, between all writers that experiences of love are mediated through society. There is a suggestion that love has a social dimension; that what we think

of as love is determined by the social conditions within which we find ourselves⁶. Upon further analysis of the literature this thesis proposes that there are two dominant 'stories' being told about love (and society) within existing sociological literature. The first approach to love maps the the increasing individualisation of love, drawing out the implications of this trend for interpersonal relationships; whilst the second 'story' focuses on the doing of love through the action of 'being for the other'. The following chapter explores these in detail.

⁶ Though love itself may not be constructed by society (c.f. Bauman, Fromm, Scheler, Simmel)

Chapter Two: Perspectives about Love within the Literature

This thesis proceeded upon the basis that collections of ideas about the nature of any given phenomenon, are played out in the physical world through the organisation of the environment and the behaviours of others. Taken altogether, Goffman (1974) refers to these as frames and argues that they orientate people's interpretations of situations and their subsequent behaviour. The benefit of using frame as a way of conceptualising love is that it allows the theorist to explore the *social* meaning of love, in a way that is grounded within the accounts and experiences of individuals, but one that does not conceptualise it as an individual experience that is constructed anew in each moment. Instead love can be viewed as an individual experience that is guided or *organised* by a set of supra-individual conventions. Love, then, is an individual experience but not an individual construction; rather it is enacted in a context which precedes and succeeds any one person. Proposing similar ideas, authors, such as Simmel (1984), Fromm (1995) and Bauman (2003) posit that individuals are the 'source' of love and at the same time maintain the connection between the individual and wider society. Fromm (1995: 65), for example, states that love is an individual capacity *but* that this capacity is affected by the society that the individual exists within: 'the capacity to love in an individual living in any given culture depends on the influence this culture has on the character of the average person'. Love, then, is both 'individual' and 'inseparably connected with the social realm' (Fromm, 1995: 101).

The view that an individual's experience of love is governed by the way it is conceptualised and understood within society is common to all social thinkers,

even when there is disagreement about whether this social dimension is all there is, or whether there is an objectively 'real' love quite separate from social models of love. With regards to love's nature, a number of theorists provide descriptive accounts of what they believe 'love' is like and the ways in which love impacts on people within contemporary society⁷. In drawing out the continuities between theorists, two narratives that dominate sociological descriptions of love were identified: those who emphasise the objectivity of 'genuine' love; and those who focus on the increasing individualisation of love. The two groups are not mutually exclusive. Fromm (1995) and Bauman (2003), for example, argue that love has an objective essence *and* affirm a trend towards a social understanding of love that is individualised. This chapter explores these two approaches. The task of this chapter is to elucidate the perspectives and not to map out all theoretical work into one of these two groups. This has resulted, therefore, in some of the work explored in the previous chapter becoming central within this one. Likewise, some of the previous literature is not mentioned or discussed again. The inclusion of one theorist or theoretical idea, rather than another, has been chosen because it more clearly elucidates the approach being examined; there is a 'fullness' of expression within the literature presented in this chapter that is inchoate in others.

Two approaches to love found within social theory

Discussion begins with a description of the approach that views love as having an objective existence, one that is grounded in the orientation of the self to the other. Love within this approach is conceived of as a capacity of a loving individual and not merely as a feeling that arises in response to the particular

⁷ These descriptive accounts are not, however, grounded in empirical data and may be critiqued on this basis.

characteristics of the other. Rather, love takes responsibility for the well-being of the other before they have any sense of knowing them. This is because love presumes that loveable characteristics exist within the individual, but it does not make seeing evidence of them a condition of loving. This attitude of 'being-for-the-other' as a conceptualisation of love is predominantly found within the work of Erich Fromm (1995), Max Scheler (1992; 1973) and Zygmunt Bauman (2003) and so there is a focus on their works as central to this perspective.

None of these theorists, however, claim that 'genuine' love characterises ideas and practices of loving in modern society. Instead they each argue that love has become 'corrupted', predominantly by capitalism and the distorted value system that it holds (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973). Thus the second section within this chapter explores the reasons why people in modern society do not adequately 'love their neighbour' and are not orientated to others like they 'should' be. There is much similarity between the reasons proffered for this distortion of love and the sociological literature that claims love has become individualised and particularised. The major difference being, that those writing in the latter approach do not see individualised love as a poor copy of some original love that has become corrupted.

The third section, then, seeks to explore the literature that claims that love has become, or is becoming, increasingly individualised, but that does not base their analyses on a comparison to 'genuine love'. Rather, it is claimed that the process of individualisation began with large-scale social change but this process has impacted on loving relationships. The theorists within this perspective seek to explain this process. What characterises love within an individualised society is a focus on self, rather than others; a desire to remain 'free' whilst living life

'together'; greater freedom to leave relationships that are no longer fulfilling; and a focus on the particular (loveable) characteristics of others, and a reliance on this for the creation of loving feeling. These have been associated with greater levels of risk within love relationships, because love has become more and more conditional and relationships are electively entered into and exited out of. Writers operating within this approach include Giddens (1992; 1991), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), Kaufmann (2011) and Illouz (2012). As such this section focuses on their writings on love and society as a way of exploring the perspective as whole.

Objective love as expressed through an attitude of being-for-the-other

'Accepting the precept of loving one's neighbour is the birth act of humanity' (Bauman, 2003: 78).

The relationship between love and morality, ethics and solidarity is a theme that can be found within the writings of Bauman, Durkheim, Fromm, Hochschild, Greer, Kaufmann, Scheler, Simmel and Weber. All of these authors make reference to love as the basis for social solidarity through the construction and maintenance of social bonds. Implicit, or explicitly in some work, is the notion that love is the answer to collective living, such that collective living is best understood as collective loving. Scheler argues, for example, that love '*possesses* the "moral goodness" in the most eminent and ultimate sense of the term' because love has a 'specifically moral value insofar as it represents a relationship *between* persons' (Scheler in Dy, 1999: 82-83, emphasis added). Similarly, Bauman (2003: 17) claims that 'love is one of the palliative answers to the blessing/curse of human individuality' because love has the capacity to overcome loneliness by forging bonds with others. Love makes '*an* other into the definite someone' whom we care

and are responsible for (Bauman, 2003: 20, emphasis in original). Responsibility for the other is, Bauman (1990) argues, the necessary condition of all morality and morality 'is the secret of sociality' (Bauman, 1990: 16). Love is thus intimately connected to moral, social life.

According to authors such as Max Scheler, Erich Fromm and Zygmunt Bauman, love as the basis for moral relationships is not, however, inevitable. Rather, it is only a certain 'type' of love – one that orientates itself towards the other – that is foundational for social solidarity. For reasons of greater depth of analysis in their work, this section will focus on the work of these thinkers and the ways in which they conceive 'being for the other' as central to the relationship between love, morality and solidarity. Their ideas express the being-for-the-other perspective in love that is implicit in other works.

Solidarity – as an experience of unity between individual members living collectively – is not a given for Fromm, Bauman or Scheler. Utilising the work of Levinas, Bauman (1990) for example, argues that moral relationships between people are not established simply by 'being with' each other. Fromm similarly claims that solidarity is *not* the natural conclusion of humans living together, primarily because all people are aware of themselves as separate entities and such awareness arouses feelings of anxiety, shame and guilt. Fromm (1995: 7-8) argues that we experience our 'separate, disunited existence [as] an unbearable prison'. He then goes on to argue that 'the deepest need of man, then, is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness'. Fromm proposes that the fundamental desire of man – and a necessary feature of a united group – is the achievement of 'interpersonal fusion' as a solution to this problem of disunity. Chapter four outlined three ways in which Fromm claims human societies attempt

to achieve interpersonal fusion: rituals engaged in to achieve an altered sense experience (Orgiastic States); through individual endeavours of creative activity; and through the subscription by an individual to a group's set of behaviours and attitudes (Conformity). Fromm argues that none of these 'solutions' actually generate interpersonal fusion and thus, they provide only partial answers to the 'problem of existence' (Fromm, 1995).

For Fromm (1995), 'Mature (or genuine) love' is the answer to the problem of existence because love creates and maintains unity. Mature love describes a love for *all* other human beings *qua* human beings and it is this type of love that forms the basis of meaningful and lasting social solidarity. 'Immature love(s)' on the other hand are types of pseudo-love that mimic love without achieving genuine 'interpersonal fusion' (Fromm, 1995). Instead immature love forms a 'symbiotic union' between people which involves 'worshipping' or being worshipped by a *particular* other. *Who* we love, then, becomes much more important than *that* we love in the first place. Fromm describes mature love as a universal brotherly love and it involves the unconditional care, responsibility, knowledge and respect for *all* other people. This type of loving can be the foundation of solidarity because it recognises the humanity in all persons and is thus a 'love amongst equals': equal in their humanity, their very humanness (Fromm, 1995).

Importantly, for Fromm brotherly love depends first on the presence of self-love. Self-love is not to be confused with self-interest or selfishness, in which an individual lacks interest in others and is focused *only* on meeting their own needs. Rather, self-love is about recognising the humanity in oneself and stating oneself as worthy of care and love. Self-love involves knowing and respecting oneself, taking

responsibility and caring for the self by recognising and meeting one's needs.

Fromm (1995: 47) tells us that

The affirmation of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom is rooted in one's capacity to love ... If an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love only others, he cannot love at all.

Thus we must love ourselves *and* others equally and so, according to Fromm it is the Judeo-Christian doctrine 'love thy neighbour as thyself' that contains the moral instructions that underpin social solidarity. Both 'neighbour' *and* 'self' are vital and a responsibility for each of them must be attended to in all individual and social action.

Max Scheler (1992) also suggests that love is the foundation of true solidarity. Love, he argues, is the basis of all life; it is 'the most fundamental act of the human person, more original than knowing and willing' (Dy, 1999: 75). Chapter four outlined Scheler's ideas regarding love and values and this aspect of his work will only be précised here. In summary, Scheler (1992: 72) claims that 'the primary orientation of love is towards [higher] values, and towards the objects discernible, through those values, as sustaining them'. Love, for Scheler (1992: 75), is a 'moment of intention ..., a movement tending to the enhancement of value'. Without love our experiences of other persons lead us to see them as 'social personalities'. Scheler proposes, however, that all living things are capable of being seen as more valuable than merely pleasant to the senses and that when we act towards individuals on this basis we are engaging in the act of loving. When we love, then, Scheler contends, we are not 'blind', rather we 'see more of what is there' that is good.

A further dimension of Scheler's (1992; 1973) work also explores the relationship between love and solidarity. Like Fromm, Scheler highlights the importance of love for both self and others. This is most evident in his ideas about the dual nature of persons. Scheler (1973) suggests that each finite individual contains within them two types of 'person': the 'individual person', that which we call the 'self'; and the 'collective person'. The collective person is not merely a collection or synthesis of individual persons (Dy, 1999; Kelly, 2011), nor is it 'an individual person of wider scope' (Scheler, 1973: 523); rather, it is the 'social consciousness of the individual person' (Kelly, 2011: 204). It is an orientation towards others as a 'totality' and the attitude through which we perform 'social acts', these being the acts that we can do *only* with other people.

[Social acts are] acts that find their fulfilment only in a possible community ... Acts of commanding, obeying, ordering, promising, vowing, and co-feeling [all] belong to this class. In contrast to these are acts of a singularizing nature (consciousness of self, self-esteem, self-love, scrutinizing one's conscience, etc.)

– Scheler, 1973: 521

Importantly for Scheler, neither the individual person, nor the collective person is more significant. He argues that they are of equal ethical value, such that neither should be subordinated to the other. Nonetheless, Scheler notes that the individual person and the communal person do not always enjoy equal status or position. Scheler (1973: 525) distinguishes different types of social units, according to the 'different kinds of being with one another', characterised by the relationship between individual persons and the communal person. It is from the examination

of Scheler's conceptualisations of different social units that his theoretical ideas about solidarity can be explored (Dy, 1999).

True solidarity can only be found, Scheler proposes, within a social unit in which there is genuine equality between individual persons and the collective person. Individuals within a social unit experiencing genuine solidarity recognise the individual person *and* the collective person within both themselves and in all others and both these aspects of a singular individual are united. Moreover, each individual within this unit is simultaneously self-responsible and co-responsible for each other member of the unit. Neither individuals nor the group enjoy elevated status because co-responsibility is mutual and the burden of responsibility is shared. It is this type of social unit that can adequately respond to the command to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. Both the self (as an individual person and as part of the collective person) and the neighbour (as both a self and as part of the collective person) are responsible for loving/caring for themselves, alongside being responsible for the other. This is, for Scheler, genuine social solidarity.

Within the other types of social unit, however, there is no experience of the totality and no orientation towards social values. There are individual persons but no recognition of communal persons. Any shared behaviour is 'involuntary imitation' (Scheler, 1992) and Scheler refers to this social unit as the 'mass'. It is similar in nature to the 'herd' found in the animal kingdom. Another social unit Scheler identifies is the 'life community'. Life within the 'life community' is *fully* co-experienced and there is a continuous experience of the totality within this social unit. There is, however, no conscious orientation to personal values and no division between the experiences of the self and that of the whole group; there are

obviously singular individuals, but little awareness of oneself outside of who one is within and to the community. Individual persons are therefore subordinate to the community, such that it may be said that there is only the whole and no (ethically) recognised parts. Within the life community a *type* of solidarity exists:

‘representable solidarity’, in which each individual member stands in equivalence to any other member. ‘Boundless trust and co-responsibility characterize life community ... [but] the values experienced in the life community belong to thing values, not personal values’ (Dy, 1999: 89), and thus exist within the lowest sphere of values: that of the values pertaining to life.

‘Society’ is a type of social unit in which individuals do not co-experience life as they do in the life community. Instead individual persons relate based upon shared ideas, and the similarity or dissimilarity of individual interests either connects or divides individual members of the group. Individuals behave in *self*-responsible ways through their actions as individual persons, but people within ‘societies’ do not act in their capacity as collective persons and so do not respond to the needs of the whole. The original, that is, inherent, *coresponsibility* that each finite person has for everything morally relevant within the totality is denied (Bauman, 2000; Scheler, 1973). Because individual persons are the primary unit within a ‘society’, the collective person is subordinate to individual persons and therefore no true solidarity exists. This is because

‘From ethical and legal points of view there is no longer any original coresponsibility ... There is nothing to be found in society in which individuals can know themselves to possess solidarity. Just as boundless trust in one another is the basic attitude in the life-community,

unfathomable and primary distrust of all in all is the basic attitude in society.'

– Scheler, 1973: 529

Any *sense* of 'common will', then, must be achieved 'by fiction or by force' (Scheler, 1973: 529). For Scheler (1973: 529), the 'fiction' of a 'common will' is constructed through 'the fortuitously identical volitional content of *all as individuals*' or what he terms the 'majority principle'. This is similar to Fromm's description of 'conformity' as an (unsuccessful) means to interpersonal fusion. 'Force' is the external imposition of the will of the majority onto the minority. This imposition cannot bring about genuine solidarity, only the illusion of it. Scheler argues that capitalism operates as a 'society'.

Like Fromm and Scheler, responsibility is the concept that underpins Bauman's work on love, morality and solidarity. Bauman (2003) argues that love is fundamentally an ethic of responsibility – a state of being *for* the other, responsible for their well-being. It is an orientation of care and responsibility *to* the other, for the other's sake. Nonetheless, even though love is other-focused, within Bauman's work, love is conceived of as an action and as a capacity of the loving individual, not as something that arises because of any qualities inherent in the other. Having said that Bauman (2003) claims that demonstrating this loving responsibility involves recognising, admitting and confirming the dignity of others, primarily achieved by talking with them and listening attentively to them. This action/process conveys to people that they are worthy of being loved.

'When we are talked to and listened to. When we are listened to attentively, with an interest that betrays/signals a readiness to respond. We gather

then that we are respected. We suppose, that is, that what we think, do, or intend to do – counts.

– Bauman, 2003: 80

Loving, then, recognises the particular character of the individual and communicates this as worthy. Love is about being seen and respected for who you are; being affirmed and validated as important. Being loved in this way leads people to see themselves as someone who matters to others and as a person ‘bearing a unique, irreplaceable and non-disposable value’ (Bauman, 2003: 80-81)⁸. Every individual is responsible, or co-responsible, for expressing love in this way and like Fromm, Bauman too claims that genuine love is to be understood in the Judeo-Christian teachings of ‘loving one’s neighbour’.

According to Bauman (1990) the condition of being responsible for the other is primary in that it is not the effect of any other aspect of being or knowing. It is a ‘pre-reflexive inner compulsion’ that acts without motivation of gain, and without expectation of reciprocity (Bauman, 1990: 14). The beloved does not need to ‘do’ anything to ‘deserve’ love; instead it is unconditionally given from the loving individual – not in response *to* the other but as responsibility *for* them. Our responsibility for others exists whether we accept it or not, but accepting our responsibility for the other is a moral act and thus love, for Bauman, is inherently moral.

⁸ Unlike Fromm, who argues that self-love is the basis of loving others, Bauman suggests that *being loved* is the basis for self-love: ‘others must love us first, so that we can begin to love ourselves’. Fromm says we love ourselves *and* others because we have the capacity to do so. For Bauman, we love *others* because we have the capacity to do so and we love *ourselves* because others love us and affirm our value and worth.

In conclusion, each of the authors discussed above proposes that the truly moral action of loving is to 'love thy neighbour as thyself' (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1992). This means that I am responsible for myself and for my neighbour – not in response to what my neighbour does or does not do (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1992) but because I love the higher values I see or presume exist within them, regardless of whether these values actually exist or not (Scheler, 1992). Love makes my 'neighbour' into '*my neighbour*' and I am responsible *for* them before I experience any sense of being *with* them. Bauman (1990: 20) argues that 'I am responsible for the Other whatever the Other does, I am responsible before he does anything at all'. Thus, responsibility for the other exists independent of a desire or decision to be so. Instead *proximity* begets responsibility and I am called to love my neighbour first and then know them later.

Love is not, however, impersonal and disinterested in the beloved – rather, 'the more deeply we penetrate into a man through an understanding cognition guided by personal love, the more unsubstitutable, irreplaceable, nonexchangeable, individual, and unique does he become for us' (Scheler, in Vacek, 1982: 166). When we love others we recognise and act towards them on the basis of their unique and personal personhood (Fromm, 1995; Bauman, 1991), even though the capacity to love others in this way does not arise out of a relationship with them. To love somebody – to be responsible for them, to *be for them* – is 'the actualisation and concentration of the power to love' (Fromm, 1995: 47). When we operate on this basis of loving co-responsibility, individuals practise the singularizing act of self-love at the same time as performing the social act of loving others; there is a unity. The 'individual person' *in* the 'communal person' is mutually responsible for both self and others and solidarity is generated and

maintained: 'love is the "power that creates unity and forms the human community"' (Scheler, in Vacek, 1982: 176). Love within this approach is considered an 'ideal ought' (Scheler, 1973); it is something we should do because it is morally right to do it and morally wrong to not do it.

Why we do not currently love our neighbours.

According to Fromm, Bauman, and Scheler the framework of existing society is so antithetical to genuine love that capitalism and love are fundamentally incompatible. This incompatibility accounts for the reason why people in modern society do not 'love their neighbours'. Capitalism, they argue, promotes values that are the antitheses of love *and* it strips or fails to instil in individuals the skills necessary for genuine loving (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995).

Both Fromm and Bauman claim that the economic market has become the judge of what is 'valuable', such that consumption is now the individual's primary orientation to the world. The moral economy⁹ has been replaced by the market economy as the regulator of social life so that people and things have become valuable only as exchangeable items and 'human love relations follow the same pattern of exchange which governs the commodity and labour market' (Fromm, 1995: 3). Love has become focused on what the individual can get from the other and lovers are selected much like consumer products are chosen. Love in a capitalist society is reactive and particularised because it loves based on the conditions and qualities found within the particular other. Fromm suggests that people treat themselves and each other as commodities in which one's value is derived by how likely someone is to 'purchase' or choose you as an object of love

⁹ Bauman (2003) describes the moral economy as containing solidarity, compassion, sharing, mutual help, mutual sympathy, living for the other, and sharing responsibility.

(Fromm, 1995). Consumer society has made individuals into love objects rather than loved or loving subjects. 'Love for' has been transformed into 'desire for' through the prioritisation of economic (market) goals in all areas of life. Much of Zygmunt Bauman's theorising on capitalism's damaging effect on love proposes similar ideas: human solidarity, he claims, has become 'the first casualty of the triumphs of the consumer market' (Bauman, 2003: 76).

Scheler's analysis proposes that capitalism is not only principally incompatible with love, but actually fails to access or prioritise higher, *personal* values in favour of those that are lower. He claims that capitalism is *built upon* a 'value distortion' in which lower values – those pertaining to the material world, such as consumer goods – are routinely preferred to values that are higher, such as love (Scheler, 1961). The spirit of capitalism, then, is inimical to genuine love; such that what we call love in capitalist society may not pass the test to be constituted as such. Bauman, for example, argues that much of the thoughts and actions considered to be 'love' in contemporary society is actually misnamed-'Desire'.

According to Fromm (1995: vii) genuine loving is an art that requires the individual has a 'productive orientation' to life. This necessitates that all people develop a 'total personality' which requires knowledge, effort and skill to achieve. Fromm argues that to achieve mastery over the theory and practise of loving requires discipline, courage, concentration and patience. Fromm suggests that these qualities are not encouraged within Western culture: outside of work modern man, he argues, is lazy; concentration has become difficult in a society where life has become diffuse and unconcentrated; and the individualised system of modernity has fostered a culture of speed which is antithetical to the quality/skill of patience. Individuals, he claims, do not have the skills necessary to

achieve mastery over anything, much less mastery over love. Capitalism places much greater importance on achieving wealth, power, status and success than it does on 'achieving love' – love 'profits the soul', not the market and so it is not prioritised in a society ruled by its economy (Fromm, 1995: 5).

At the same time, because love is so particularised and conditional, Fromm argues that people invest more time in making themselves 'attractive' to prospective partners than they invest in mastering the art of loving. In modern society love is considered 'easy' to achieve as long as you find the 'right person'; consequently people have become preoccupied with making themselves more loveable rather than developing the skills necessary for having a productive orientation to love. Bauman also claims that consumer society deskills individuals. Individuals are instead taught and encouraged to follow 'instructions', 'mostly in a surrender of responsibility' (Bauman, 2003: 75). Bauman also suggests that the modern emphasis on efficiency and managerial bureaucracy has fostered a mind-set of impatience, consequently leading people to hold an attitude of disposability towards relationships (Bauman, 2003). This pattern is a problem for Fromm because for him the primary function of love is to alleviate the human experience of separation from one another; this is not something Fromm believes can be achieved with a capitalistic pseudo-love which is based around circumstantial feelings rather than a dedication to loving action. Bauman agrees:

'Liquid modern individualized society has made long-term commitments thin on the ground, long-term engagement a rare expectation, and the obligation of mutual assistance 'come what may' a prospect that is neither realistic nor viewed as worthy of great effort'.

– Bauman, 2003: 66

Genuine loving, then, is not expected in modern society and consequently individuals operate from an understanding of love that is a distorted version of the 'real thing' without ever demanding more (Bauman, 2003).

It is not just a transformed value systems or the prioritisation of the economic market that has changed the nature of love and therefore the ability to love one's neighbour. Bauman (2003) also argues that modern technology has changed the nature of proximity and that this has negatively impacted on our sense of responsibility to others. Advances in modern technology, he claims, means that we are now able to communicate with others without being proximal; closeness can now be 'virtual'. Because, according to Bauman, proximity is the mechanism through which the ethical demand of responsibility operates, where non-virtual closeness exerts pressure to take up this ethical demand, virtual closeness does not. Virtual closeness also requires a person to have the skills necessary to navigate in-person interactions. Bauman argues that these skills may be forgotten or in some cases remain unlearned due to an over-reliance on non-proximal contact and virtual closeness.

Technology has not only changed the way we communicate and interact with one another, however, it has also distanced humankind more generally (Bauman, 2003; 1990). Thanks to advancements in technology our vision – what we are able to see of the world – has expanded, but our ability to act has not increased in the same manner. Consequently we are witness to more and more human suffering and yet we are unable to act on any compassion and mercy we may feel. Such impotence has led to apathy, claims Bauman and our loving, moral impulses are further weakened, trickling down into even our closest relationships. The trust, compassion, mutual sympathy, ethos of sharing, responsibility for the other – in

short, the solidarity – created and nurtured within the moral economy are further undermined. Nonetheless Bauman maintains that it is the consumer market – albeit enabled by the leap in technological proficiency – that encourages such moral apathy and self-interest and we readily surrender our own responsibility for others. Within this context, Bauman claims, loving one’s neighbour seems absurd.

The individualisation-of-love approach

In many ways the above theoretical narratives about the nature of love are strangely unsociological - they portray a 'genuine love' that exists outside of social ideas; moreover it is claimed that this authentic love exists in conflict with modern social conceptualisations of love. It should, perhaps, be unsurprising, then, that the more dominant narrative within sociology is one that does not claim that there is a distinction between 'real love' and 'social love', but instead concentrates on the way love has been transformed along with a changing society. Work within the 'individualisation of love' perspective suggests that as society has become more individualised, so too has love. This claim can be seen clearly within the work of thinkers such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Giddens, Illouz, Kaufmann, and Luhmann. As noted above, it is also seen within the accounts of Fromm and Bauman, who argue that alongside 'genuine love', there is a 'socially mediated' love which is subject to dominant cultural ideas. Both writers claim that 'love' has become subject to capitalist ways of being and thinking, such that there is a dominant way of conceptualising and 'doing' love that reflects capitalist ideals of the market, rather than genuine love. These ideals are centred upon the concept of the autonomous individual. This section outlines the continuities between the writers noted above, in order to articulate the common ideas about the ways in

which love has become an increasingly individual endeavour, alongside examining the implications this has on the actualisation of these ideas in the lives of social actors.

A number of social theorists point to an increasing trend towards individualised responsibility within love relationships. As noted in the previous chapter, Giddens' work traces historical change in the organisation of relationships and his analysis is very similar to those found within Luhmann, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Kaufmann's work. All of these authors claim that as society has changed from being predominantly agrarian towards industrialisation, relationships between people have changed. Agrarian society required a different division of labour than that necessary within an increasingly industrial society and the family was an important unit within the social organisation of labour (Kaufmann, 2011; Giddens, 1991). Marriages were the proper place to create family units but because the family had such an important social function, marriages were not chosen by those who would inhabit them – rather they were organised by others, often for economic purposes. Love, then, was not an expectation at the onset of a relationship or marriage and it was not considered to be the impetus for the creation of that relationship in the first place.

'Marriage was a contract, often initiated by parents or relatives rather than by the marital partners themselves. The contract was usually strongly influenced by economic considerations, and formed part of wider economic networks and transactions'.

That is not to say that love did not exist. Giddens (1992) argues that 'passionate love' is likely to have always existed as a 'universal phenomenon' – an idea affirmed by Kaufmann (2011). Giddens emphasises that the place for this love, however, was *not* within marriage, especially amongst the poor. He also suggests that love was presumed to grow within a relationship over the life-course. This type of 'companionate love' was largely linked to the mutual responsibility of husbands and wives for managing all aspects of day-to-day life. Thus, whilst love was not the impetus for marriage, marriages were not considered wholly love-less.

As society transformed from being 'traditional to modern', relationships between men and women changed, and so too did expectations of love within those relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991). Instead of partnerships and marriages being arranged by external parties, love started to become the driving force behind companionship and 'romantic love became the basic motive for marriage' (Giddens, 1991: 89). Giddens argues that the less that other people are involved in the initiation or maintenance of a relationship, the more 'pure' that relationship becomes. The 'pure relationship' is one which exists for its own sake and it is not anchored in social or economic conditions, or in the decision-making capabilities of external parties. Rather, it is entered in to freely and remained within until it ceases to bring pleasure to one or both parties. Giddens claims that over time modern relationships have to come to resemble more and more this 'pure relationship'.

Whilst Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) do not label modern relationships as being 'pure', their analysis of love in modern society proposes similar ideas to those found in Giddens' work. They suggest that, unlike traditional societies in which relationships were often initiated by parents or relatives, modern

relationships have become the responsibility of the parties participating in them – namely the couple themselves. Individuals are now expected to decide for themselves who they wish to commit to and a central consideration of this decision-making is love. Moreover, love is considered to a response to what is loveable about the person and is thus conditional on their unique characteristics (Illouz, 2012; Fromm, 1995). Kaufmann (2011) similarly notes that autonomous individuals have become responsible for their choices in life and relationships, and that love is the driving force behind many of these decisions. All of these theorists point to an increasing individualisation within emotional life (Kaufmann, 2011; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991) and, alongside providing similar analyses of the trends regarding the connections between love and relationships/marriages, there appears to be a general consensus regarding both the causes and the implications of this trend. Many theorists have proposed that the individualisation of love mirrors increasing individualisation in all aspects of social life (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Fromm, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) claim that within modern society individuals must take responsibility for all aspects of their lives. In this sense individuals have become the primary ‘social’ unit of society. Whilst communities continue to exist, they are no longer the *de facto* source of security, identity or solidarity. Rather, these things have to be *generated* within the individual’s life *by* the individual. This means that the status of the ‘individual’ is greater now than ever, and it also affords a person more freedom in deciding who they want to be, how they want to live and who they want to live with. This, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue, comes at a cost and this cost is just as individualised as

everything else. Because the individual has the freedom to navigate their lives as they wish, they are also held accountable for their actions. This means that decision making in all aspects of life – which were previously the domain of significant others or the general community – are now sources of anxiety, because both the decisions and the consequences of those decisions are the responsibility of the individual. As soon as choice is available so is the risk of getting it wrong. Giddens (1991: 109) refers to this same process as one of ‘open human control of the natural and social worlds’. He argues that modernity has ‘on an individual and collective level ... radically altered the existential parameters of social activity’ (Giddens, 1991: 214). The self has become a reflexive project and constructing oneself is ‘life-political’ activity.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Giddens all argue that modern life is inherently riskier than life in the traditional social order and that the same can be said of love. Despite love achieving a new status at the very heart of our modern lives, the personal freedom that comes with an individualised society means that there is a ‘collision of interests between love, family and personal freedom’ (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 1995: 1). The demand for relationships that are personally fulfilling, alongside the ontological insecurity of modernity, means that individuals feel it necessary to keep their options open; love relationships, then, lack a sense of permanence. The dark side of the freedom to enter in to a relationship of one’s choosing is the existence of the same freedom to leave it at will. Giddens (1992; 1991) argues that this freedom is beneficial to relationships because

‘In relationships which only exist for their own sake, anything that goes wrong ... threatens the relationship itself. Consequently, it is very difficult to ‘coast along’ in the way in which one can in a social relation dominated by external criteria’.

'Pure relationships' make people try harder to maintain them according to Giddens, primarily because it is the responsibility of the parties involved to navigate their own relationship course¹⁰. The 'type' of love associated with the pure relationship Giddens calls 'confluent love' and its key characteristic is its contingency. The conditionality associated with confluent love and the pure relationship significantly undermines commitment. The success of the pure relationship is dependent upon the extent to which one or both individuals are having their needs met. This type of love is, therefore, necessarily self-focused rather than other-focused because it demands perpetual reflexivity about whether the other person is 'right' for us (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995). This induces anxiety in individuals and is the cause of the 'riskiness' of modern relationships (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992). Because modern relationships are elective, their initiation is dependent upon individuals choosing one another in the first instance and their maintenance is dependent upon them continuing to make this choice over time. This is why some theorists (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003) have described modern relationships as 'disposable'.

In sum then, the individualisation of love concerns a process in which individuals are increasingly responsible for their own affective experiences. This includes decisions about who to love, how to love and when to love. Relationships are now said to be negotiated between the individuals who reside in them, free from external pressures and from decision-makers outside of the couple-relationship (Giddens, 1992; 1991). Freedom is one of the results of this process.

¹⁰ Such an argument has been criticised, however, for failing to take in to account the imbalances of power that effect the extent to which one person – the woman – has to be responsible for navigating the relationship over time (Jamieson, 1998; Duncombe and Marsden, 1993).

Risk is another: freedom to enter into a relationship means freedom to exit out of it too. Moreover, the individualisation of love also means that love relationships consist of 'two individuals together' and not 'one couple'. Consequently, it is claimed, individuals have a preoccupation with the needs of themselves as individuals, rather than themselves as part of a unit. This makes relationship breakdown more likely as people seek to forgo commitment in favour of freedom to find something 'better' (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

The individualisation of love also refers to a process of particularisation regarding lovers. Love relationships are now chosen on the basis of the particular characteristics of others (Illouz, 2012). This is not a love that affirms all others as uniquely valuable whilst loving in the individual their own unique personality (as within the being-for-the-other perspective). Rather, it is a love that loves only when it finds the unique person loveable (Illouz, 2012; Fromm, 1995). Again, this contributes to a greater riskiness within modern relationships; any change in one's personality or bodily appearance potentially threatens the relationship because it may undermine how 'loveable' the other person finds you. Love, then, in modern society is conditional.

Such conditionality is not only associated with continued evaluation of persons as 'right', however, but also with expectations of reciprocity (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). These expectations revolve around a desire each individual has to not put in more than is received back. This makes people try harder in relationships according to Giddens (1992) and is also a way of evaluating the success of one's relationship when seeking to stay in the relationship or leave it (Giddens, 1992). Bauman (2003) is critical of such a position, believing instead that this dimension of modern love relationships demonstrates a failure to 'love one's

neighbour' and is an indicator that the economic values of the market have infected love relationships. Such an orientation to the other mimics the way people approach the stock market, never wanting to lose more than they put it. What is a fine attitude to have with regards to the stock market, argues Bauman, is objectionable with regards to people. Both theorists, however, affirm the conditionality of relationships as being characteristic of love in modern society, despite disagreeing about what consequences this has for individuals.

'Individualisation' is a term used to characterise modern conceptualisations of love but the term 'individualised' contains many dimensions. Primarily, the individualisation of love describes a way of seeing love within which an individual is responsible for their own affective experience. It also involves understanding the means of experiencing love as coming from the interplay between two individuals, within which the unique personality of the other is central in bringing forth a loving feeling. Ultimately, 'individualisation' is about continually making *choices* and these choices are the responsibility of the individual and no-one else. The autonomous individual is held accountable for the choices they make about who to love, how to love and when to love. Consequently individuals have become reflexive about their love relationships, always demanding to be fulfilled and questioning why they are not. Entering and leaving relationships at will is experienced as a necessary part of emotional life, but one that contains a double-edged sword of freedom and risk. Love is no less important in modern life, however; instead it is more significant now than it has ever been before (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

Conclusions

When this research project was initiated the sociological literature on love was not well-organised into a series of documents or collections of works, nor did any boundaries exist that delineated a 'sociology of love' from other similar areas of study, such as emotion more generally. Indeed, a first investigation into sociological analyses of love led to an early claim that love was missing from sociology. This was not a claim that could be supported once investigation went deeper. There *is* a literature on love; it *was* there but just not easily locatable. Once the literature had been identified, however, there seemed to be a division within the various ideas regarding the nature of love and what consequences this has on the enactment of love in modern society. It is this division that has been outlined in this chapter.

The first approach to love is a hopeful one. It conceptualises love as having an objective basis and one that has positive implications for social relationships. 'Genuine' love, as conceived within this approach, is other-focused and takes responsibility for the other. Love within this perspective loves its neighbour, whether the neighbour is 'deserving' of love or not. It is not based on conditional action or appearance, but on an original responsibility for the other that pre-exists any experience *of* the other. Love may be felt deeply, but it is not merely a feeling brought about in response to others, but a capacity of a loving individual. This type of love is also diffuse and describes a 'brotherly love' for many others, though it is not an impersonal love and simultaneously respects the uniqueness of each person and affirms their value as an irreplaceable human being (Bauman, 2003; Fromm,

1995; Scheler, 1973). Because of this centripetal outlook, love of this kind can bind people to one another and is the foundation of true social solidarity.

The second approach to love is less hopeful. Descriptions of love within this perspective highlight the individualised nature of love in modern society; a process initiated by an individualisation of society in general. Love is a choice that is bestowed upon those we choose to bestow it upon but we make this choice with conditions in mind. Love is negotiated between parties depending on what each person can bring to the relationship; love has an exchange value and reciprocity is expected. A society-level preoccupation with self has entered into love relationships and loving experiences centre upon what can be achieved from others, rather than what can be given to them. Choices can always be revoked and this undermines commitment, though there is a lack of consensus regarding whether this is a positive or negative dimension of modern loving. Some argue that this is beneficial to individuals because it gives them greater freedom and makes everyone try harder (Giddens, 1992). Others argue that relationships are more risky (Illouz, 2012; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), whilst others suggest that they have become 'disposable' (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003).

These descriptions of two identified approaches to love within sociological theorising could be read as caricatures of love that do not exist anywhere except within the literature. Moreover, neither theoretical position is grounded within empirical enquiry. Within this thesis, therefore, testing the accuracy of these descriptions was a matter of empirical confirmation (or not). With this in mind, then, the following chapters examine the theoretical foundations of the empirical research (chapter three), describe the research process itself (chapter four), and explain the findings of the empirical study (chapter five). Chapter seven then

explores the literature in light of the data, seeking to understand the extent to which either approach towards love in modern society is an accurate reflection of lived experience. It also examines the implications of the current understandings of love, as articulated within this research, for understanding social life as a moral life and the role that love may play in bringing about social solidarity.

Chapter Three: Goffman, Frame Analysis and the

'Love Frame'

Of primary empirical interest within this project were 'situations' of love, specifically the shared understandings about how love is enacted and identified between people within interaction. The central tenet of the research was that the concept of love has to be *shared* by members of a society in order to be meaningful to them. 'Love' must therefore be conceptualised as having a 'social' dimension and not as something uniquely constructed by the individual. This is not to say that individuals do not 'feel' their own feelings – rather, it is the suggestion of this thesis that what constitutes love in the first place must be 'held in common' (Durkheim, 2001). This research was thus concerned with uncovering the informing, constitutive 'rules' of 'love-behaviour' in order to begin to explain social activity in this area (Goffman, 1974).

Explaining social activity around love is considered an important sociological task because having an operationalised idea of what love is may help us to better understand social relationships on both a micro and macro level (Scheff, 2006). Scheff (2006: 112) argues that 'the way love is used in ordinary language ...serves to hide and disguise the nature of human relationships' and this impacts on the way we think about and theorise concepts such as social integration and solidarity. Scheff (2006) argues that the lack of a *conceptual* definition of love (or agreement of one) has been detrimental to sociology's understanding, both of the emotion and how it impacts upon our lives on a daily basis. He argues that any work that has been undertaken on love has proceeded on the basis of what love is *presumed* to mean in everyday life and he considers this to be problematic, arguing

that in order to understand a phenomenon we first need to define it. In agreement with Scheff, and as can be seen within the previous chapters, this thesis argues that sociological theory *does* appear to have proceeded on the basis of presumption and, as will be elucidated within chapter seven, has made claims on this basis that are somewhat problematic because of it. A purpose of this project, then, was to initiate a sociological 'conceptual definition' of love; one that was grounded, not in presumption, but in empirical data that captured the experiences of 'loving' individuals.

Because the research required data grounded in the experiences of social actors, and at the same time wanted to access shared meanings, a conceptual framework that reconciles the two was needed. 'Frame analysis', as articulated by Erving Goffman (1974), was employed within this project as a tool which resolves the tension that exists when seeking to study cultural ideas and individual experiences. This was because a frame analysis focuses on the 'seen but unnoticed rules' that *guide* an individual's importation in any given context, enabling them to navigate the situation with relative ease and providing meaning to otherwise meaningless events (Goffman, 1972). Shared understandings are the focus of exploration within a frame analysis but the individual is acknowledged as the 'user' of these collectively understood meanings. The benefit of this concept, then, is that it allows for the exploration of meaning at the level of the individual without falling into relativism. The concept of 'frame', then, was the theoretical idea that this project used to account for the relationship between the individual and society. It was employed as a tool that enabled an exploration of the ways in which *individuals* enact love *within* cultural boundaries. At the time of writing, no other studies had used frame analysis as a starting point for understanding emotions in

general, nor love in particular; it is the argument of this thesis, however, that the concept is well suited for such a task.

'Frames' are something social actors *use* with relative ease, but likely find difficult to elucidate (Goffman, 1974). The same challenge presents itself to the social theorist who wishes to explain them. Firstly, then, in order to begin explaining the concept of 'frames', an example unrelated to love – attending the theatre – is used to explore the presence and use of frames in everyday life. Secondly the chapter elucidates the difference between two principal means of making sense of the world we encounter – the natural and social 'primary frameworks' (Goffman, 1974: 21). The way that the concepts of natural and social frames were applied to emotional life within this research is then explained. The chapter concludes by proposing the usefulness of the conceptual application of frames in the sociological study of love in particular.

Frames: what they are and what they do.

When a person goes to the theatre to watch a play there are a number of things, both literal and metaphorical, that have to be apprehended, understood and acted upon in order to 'achieve' a 'successful' theatre trip. How do they know where to sit or in which direction to look, for example? How do they know when it is ok to talk and when silence is more appropriate? How are they made aware that the 'action' is starting? How do they know which people are the actors and which are the audience? What indicates that a particular set of actions are real and others are part of the play? All these questions, and more, have to be dealt with moment-to-moment upon entering the theatre. Helpfully, according to Goffman, there are guides (frames) that enable us to go through the process of negotiating the

normative rules of a given situation without causing undue stress – in fact, much of the time, once we are familiar with a given frame, we rarely notice it at all.

Frames can act 'literally' to set apart an event (Manning, 1980), or part of the event and this can be done via physical features of the environment, via verbal and non-verbal behaviour or through visual media such as written words and images. Frames also act in a metaphorical way, in that they can also indicate meanings and facilitate understanding (Manning, 1980). To return to the example of a theatre trip: when we are sitting in the auditorium we can usually see a stage and this tells us in which direction we need to be facing. It also indicates the status of persons within the theatre – those up on the stage are, ordinarily, the actors – as well as the status of the action – 'real' action occurs off-the-stage, whilst dramatic action occurs on-the-stage¹¹.

A curtain usually separates the stage from the auditorium and this not only provides a physical barrier to a publicly inaccessible place (the stage itself and 'backstage'), its movement also provides a clue about when the play is starting or ending. This usually coincides with a change in lighting in order to indicate that full attention towards the stage (and the people on it) is required, alongside obliging people to stop talking or to do so very quietly. Because we frequently attend the theatre with others that we may (but probably do not) know, their behaviours also indicate what it is that we should and should not do. The physicality of the stage and curtain act in literal ways to separate actors and audience, but they also act metaphorically as a way of indicating the various meanings associated with theatre productions. They are examples of the organisational features of a situation that

¹¹ As Goffman (1974) points out, the activity on-the-stage is real enough in that it is actual persons doing actual activities. And yet the fact that the people performing the activities are doing so on-the-stage indicates that we are to see this as being a 'fictional reality'.

enable people to recognise ‘what is going on here’ and then respond or act accordingly. Goffman (1974) calls this collection of ‘organisational features’ a frame.

Frames exist prior to and subsequent to any given situation, enabling the interpretation of – they *define* – the situation. They also indicate avenues for relevant action whilst not fully *determining* behaviour: for example, we can stand at the theatre; we are able to shout in conversation even though we usually say very little during the course of a performance; and actors *can* sit amongst the audience and perform from there.¹² Action is *guided* by the frame but not controlled by it. For Goffman, our social experiences are neither pre-determined by structures, nor are we free to do as we please. Rather, Goffman contends that experience is *organised*.

That being said frames are often so compelling that we can struggle to recognise ‘out-of-frame’ activity (Goffman, 1974). For example, in April 2012 a theatre performer died during a production of *The Passion of Christ* in which he accidentally hung himself. The *Daily Mail* (2012) describes that

‘While acting the scene in which Judas commits suicide after betraying Jesus, he was supposed to ‘hang himself’ from a rope then pretend to be dead. But the safety vest the actor was wearing under his robe is believed to have risen up across his neck, strangling him. Mr Klimeck was left dangling for four minutes until horrified performers and spectators realised it wasn’t part of his performance and rushed to his aid.’

¹² This in itself would likely be confusing for the audience as it does not fit in with the ‘normal theatre frame’.

Spectators believed that the hanging was part of the dramatic action because of the location of the action (on stage) and because of who was performing the action (an actor). Despite the fact that what was 'really' happening – an actual hanging – was taking place in front of many people (an occurrence uncommon today), these people accepted the display as part of the drama – which because it was embedded within a 'theatre frame' was accepted as appropriate and was unquestioned for a time. Both performers and spectators had an idea about what to expect and proceeded, at least initially, on this basis.

Although we may not be consciously aware of it, frames direct our expectations of almost any situation that we may find ourselves in, and it is on this basis that they are used within this project – frames, it is argued, direct our expectations of love behaviours. Goffman (1974) argues that we 'read' a situation and make a decision about 'what is going on here?' regardless of whether we are participating in the situation directly or observing it. He argues that this is only possible if we are able to 'glance' at a situation and quickly apply meaning to it. This act of perceiving what is going on around us and applying meaning to it is the way we actively penetrate or participate in the world; this process, Goffman argues, is made possible through frames. Frames are a 'problem-solving schemata, stored in memory, for the interpretative task of making sense of presenting situations' (Johnston, 1995: 217). It is frames that enable different people to look at the same situation and see the same thing. Frames facilitate shared understanding.

Although the application of a frame is done by an individual we must not be tempted to see frames as arising *from* the individual. W.I. Thomas suggests that 'if

men define situations as real then they are real in their consequences' (Thomas, cited in Goffman, 1974: 1). Goffman (1974: 1-2) argues, however, that although

'a 'definition of the situation' is almost always to be found...those who are in the situation ordinarily do not create this definition...ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly'.

Definitions of the situation then, are 'built up in accordance with principles of organization' (Goffman, 1974: 10). Goffman applies this same thinking to frames: frames are not merely a matter of mind but instead relate to the way an activity itself is organised. He explains that in matters of frame 'organizational premises are involved, and these are something cognition arrives at, not something cognition creates or generates' (Goffman, 1974: 247). Crook and Taylor (1980: 245) explain it like this: 'I frame my experiences, but the structure of the frame is prior to my experiences'. Frames are 'held-in-common' (Durkheim, 2001) between many minds, although applied by one.

This aspect of *Frame Analysis* has been problematic for some theorists – most notably those within sociological analyses of social movements (Koenig, 2005; Benford and Snow, 2000), and within media studies (Koenig, 2005). Social movement theorists have, for example, used 'frame analysis' to understand 'the character and course of social movements' (Benford and Snow, 2000:611). Koenig (2005) notes, however, that these approaches have departed significantly from Goffman's original theorising. In particular, they have taken an interpretative approach to 'frames', failing to treat frames as 'structuring' (Gonos, 2000). Similarly, whilst working with the concept of frame, those within media studies have characterised frames as being *actively* selected and manipulated (Koenig, 2005). Koenig suggests that such a characterisation moves away entirely from

Goffman's work, whose original theory proposed frames as innate to social processes and not inhering within the minds of individuals – the latter characterisation again being closely aligned to an interpretivist and symbolic interactionist position. Although Goffman has been aligned with symbolic interactionism (SI), Gonos (2000) argues that to do so fundamentally misunderstands both Goffman's work and the central tenets of symbolic interactionism. He argues that their differing conceptual definitions of the term 'situation', highlights the theoretical disparity that exists between Goffman and SI.

Gonos argues that the symbolic interactionist views 'situations' as being constructed by social action/actors. Alternatively, Goffman – despite also utilising the term 'situation' – moves away from this conceptualisation and proposes an alternative and opposing paradigm, and one which is much more in line with Durkheimian functionalism (Gonos, 2000). In distinguishing between 'situations' and 'frames' Gonos suggests that the central differences between the two concepts are that whilst situations are unique, precarious and constructed moment-to-moment, frames are relatively stable, structuring and ordering – invisibly governing activity. For symbolic interactionists shared understandings are generated through interaction within situations; whilst for Goffman shared understandings lie in the pre-existing system of rules that organises/structures the interpretation of a situation and both enables and constrains action.

Meanings, then, for Goffman do not arise spontaneously through interaction, but exist prior to interaction or engagement in a situation; neither are meanings generated through interpretation – instead people *apply* meanings already available to them. Goffman suggests that when faced with a discrepancy between the frame – what is actually going on (or said to be going on) – and an

individual's definition of the situation (a process he refers to as mis-framing) it is most often the individual who has to reconfigure their definition or else cover up their error, rather than the frame itself changing to accommodate the individual's misrecognition. If the individual continues their action on the basis of their misinterpretation of the frame, embarrassment often occurs (Goffman, 1974). This is because frames are structural processes that construct a sense of normalcy and normatively order the social world for the individuals subject to them (Miztal, 2001). Any perception that we have of the world as 'normal' or 'usual' is facilitated by frames; for Barbara Miztal (2001: 321) 'normality ... is about frames' because they render the world legible.

Miztal (2001: 316) argues that 'normality' is a 'functional necessity' within society; that is, it is a protective mechanism that provides people with feelings of certainty, safety and familiarity. It is associated with a sense of stability and continuity of both the present and the future. Because of this, normality, she suggests, is necessary for social order. It is not something that exists *sui generis*, however, instead 'normality, or normal order, is a collective achievement' (Miztal, 2001: 322). Utilising Goffman's work, Miztal argues that normality is accomplished through the production of normal appearances, the stigmatising of 'abnormality', and through frames; each of which contributes to the production of social order through predictability, reliability, and legibility.

Central to the productive mechanisms (normal appearances, stigma and frames) noted above are rules of conduct that social actors are obliged to follow. These have been referred to as 'involvement obligations' (Goffman, 1967; Rawls, 1987). This is because 'normality' has both a factual and normative dimension. The factual dimension of normality is the 'average', present or factual state of the world. This dimension contains propositions about the way the world *is*; it is

recognised by identifying regularities within the world around us. The normative dimension of 'normality' is, however, evaluative. This dimension contains propositions about the way the world *ought* to be; 'normal' refers to something's 'ideal state'. This 'ideal oughtness' necessitates a set of conventions and rules that an individual is obliged to follow if they are to be considered 'normal'. Any sense of collective order as normal, then, is sustained by adherence to rules; this rule following behaviour consequently makes the world predictable, reliable, and legible (Misztal, 2001).

It could be argued, then, that because of their normative structuring of the world, frames are a form of social or ideological control through the existence of a right versus wrong way to orientate one's behaviour. Indeed, Misztal (2001) points to a similarity between Goffman and Foucault's work on 'normalisation' as a mechanism of power and social control. Certainly Goffman proposes that individuals are subject *to* frames rather than being in control *of* them. Moreover, our inclination to be carried along by the frame (to avoid embarrassment or other negative sanctions) may make some situations challenging for particular individuals: a child who struggles to sit still, for example, may be labelled as persistently disobedient – not because he is so, but because of the demand of the frame within a school classroom, which requires him to stay seated for long periods of time. Both errors of frame recognition, and the tendency to go along with the demands of a frame, may have negative consequences for the individual. Only the first of these potential issues is acknowledged by Goffman (1974), however.

Nonetheless Goffman's 'individual' is a *skilled* actor with 'capacities' and abilities to navigate, manipulate and resist the structures/frames that they operate within:

'a situated activity system provides an arena for conduct ... [where] the individual constantly twists, turns, and squirms, even while allowing himself to be carried along by the controlling definition of the situation'.

– Goffman, 1969: 91

Behaviour, then, is never just determined by a frame. The individual *navigates* the situation according to framing conventions but sometimes this is an active process whereby individuals resist the definition of the situation and seek to change it, rather than a passive process of reception.

Criticism has been levied at Goffman's description of frames, for portraying frames as being relatively 'benign'; a critical stance, it has been argued, is missing from Goffman's work (Sharron, 1981; Gamson, 1975). Whilst this is a fair critique, it should, however, be noted that Goffman is not wholly disinterested in 'inequality'¹³. His work on stigma, mental illness and institutions all testify to his concern regarding the *interactional* inequalities that people with 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1968) must endure. Elsewhere Goffman's (1972; 1969; 1961) work proposes that rules of conduct have a moral nature, through the interactional obligations within which he is 'morally constrained to conduct himself' (Goffman, 1969: 473). Frames, then, should not be conceived, automatically, as amoral organising mechanisms and thus criticisms claiming the neutrality of frames should not be overstated.

Frames contain an inherent morality within them because particular 'rules of conduct' associated with the frame oblige individuals to act towards each other in moral ways. Moreover, in order to maintain their own and other's 'presentations of self', *every* situation requires each individual to commit to interactional ground

¹³ as it is loosely described.

rules (Goffman, 1969[1959]); this commitment is a moral, not a structural imperative (Rawls, 1987). Goffman tells us that

‘The general capacity to be bound by moral rules may well belong to the individual, but the particular set of rules which transforms him into a human being derives from requirements established in the ritual organization of social encounters’.

– Goffman, 1972: 44 (my emphasis)

The moral imperative, then, does not belong to the individual but to the organising mechanism which acts upon the individual – the frame.

Frames constrain action by guiding individuals towards relevant behaviour but they are not rigidly applied rules of conduct that determine behaviour in every possible encounter. There may well be an element of control exerted over the individual by the frame and one could certainly see where this could have negative consequences for the individual. Overwhelmingly, however, frames *enable* individuals by providing meaning and thus helping them to navigate the social world in a meaningful way. They enable individuals to quickly glance at a situation and have an idea about ‘what is going on (t)here’. The extent to which individuals are able to do this competently determines their relevant (or not) involvement in the situation (Misztal, 2001). Ultimately frames are the *organisational features* of a situation that facilitate an individual’s immediate recognition of an event; this then enables the individual to act according to the rules of conduct of the occasion and this has moral implications. Moreover, Mistzal (2001) argues that frames are necessary for the production of normality, a necessary mechanism of protection against the contingency and arbitrariness of social life.

Natural and Social Primary Frames

When we perceive the world we require a 'tool' that renders, otherwise meaningless aspects of a scene, into something meaningful (Goffman, 1974). In establishing what he means when talking about frames and their application, Goffman articulates different types of frameworks that are used for establishing meaning in the world, or 'recognising' an event – these he refers to as primary frameworks. Goffman suggests that in our society there are two broad primary frameworks: the natural and the social. Natural frameworks refer to aspects of the world and activities that are unguided, undirected and purely physical. Normality within natural frames has only a factual dimension. Things belonging to the natural framework are considered 'products of nature' and are not subject to criteria of success and failure. The law of gravity is an example of a frame that exists within the natural framework – people use it (implicitly at least) in order to navigate the physical world. It gives meaning to the fact that we can walk, jump and use objects, for example, without them floating off in to space. Moreover, within natural frames actors are given no special status, 'being subject to the same deterministic, will-less, nonmoral way of being as any other part of the scene' (Goffman, 1974: 188);

Social frameworks, however, incorporate concepts of will, intention, aims and the controlled effects of an intelligent agent. Social frameworks are used to provide meaning to 'guided doings' (Goffman, 1974: 22) and they subject doers to standards of doing and involves a social appraisal of action; social frameworks involve 'deeds' not just 'events'. Normality within social frames is therefore *normative* because it is established and upheld by adherence to rules, all of which exist to create and sustain an 'ideal' state. According to Goffman (1974) there is an inherent morality *implied* within social frameworks through the existence of rules

of conduct. People are obligated by rules but the choice about whether to actually follow them is a matter of will. *All* social frameworks involve rules and whilst some rules establish a purpose or aim within them, others merely articulate what we need to be doing when involved in a given course of action. The rules of poker, for example, establish the purpose of the game within the rules themselves. Traffic lights, on the other hand, are signals that guide conduct – they let us know what we should be doing and when, but tell us nothing about the intention of the person using them. Nonetheless the doing or not doing of particular actions – as guided by the rules of conduct of any given social frame – is used as a tool for the evaluation of the moral behaviour of individuals.

Individuals within social frames are considered self-determined agents, ‘legally competent to act and morally responsible for doing so properly’ (Goffman, 1974: 188). Goffman proposes a number of characteristics that are assumed to be found in ‘normal actors’ and suggests that we rely on these in all interpersonal dealings. Indeed, when an individual fails to possess the characteristics we assume them to have, this can cause interactional difficulty¹⁴. Within social frames, then, the individual is considered responsible for the ways they interpret the frame and their compliance with the (implicitly) accepted rules of conduct is scrutinised. Such evaluation exists because social life requires a moral commitment to a shared order (Misztal, 2001; Rawls, 1987). Failure to accept the obligations of rule-following, or lacking the competence to do so, therefore threatens the social order because it erodes situational normality and draws attention to the contingency of social life. Social order requires a ‘working consensus’ – which is established and maintained through frames – and this consensus is underpinned by adherence to

¹⁴ Much of Goffman’s work (1972; 1969; 1968; 1961) explores such implications in greater detail.

interactional rules of conduct. Abiding by social rules, then, is not merely a trivial matter of following some arbitrary conventions of behaviour; rather it is a tacit agreement to play one's part in upholding the social order. To accept, or not, this directive is to make a moral 'choice' and Goffman (1972; 1969; 1968; 1961) says that, even though many of these 'choices' are not consciously made, but are enacted as part of routine social life, people are held accountable for their 'choices' and classifications of one's moral character are imputed to individuals on this basis. Social frames, then, are infused with moral significance.

Despite describing them in distinct ways, Goffman acknowledges that a simple division between natural and social frameworks is problematic, especially in relation to the status of the individual. Although it is often taken for granted, all action involves entrance into the natural order, usually by virtue of the fact that the action is done by physical bodies – any segment of a social framework can, therefore, be analysed within a natural schema. Goffman (1974: 188) argues, then, that we 'routinely treat others from within both social and natural perspectives ... with a close and effortless weaving of two types of frameworks', applying several frames at any one time, drawing on a combination of natural and social frameworks of meaning. Nonetheless, Goffman suggests that ordinarily a particular framework is *chiefly* relevant and can therefore be used to explain events and attend to the question 'what is 'it' that is going on here?'. This, Goffman argues, remains true, despite the fact that there is usually more than one 'it' (one course of action) going on at any given time. Moreover, whenever we treat someone from within a social perspective we automatically impute a moral code through the evaluation of their personhood and their actions. Ascription of behaviour or events

as either natural or social, then, has consequences for the way we perceive (and treat) others, ourselves and the world at large.

Understanding the natural and/or social nature of emotions has been a point of discussion for many theorists (Turner and Stets, 2006; Williams, 2001; Lupton, 1998). Emotions have been conceived of as having a strong biological component and thus positioned as 'natural' phenomena (Williams, 2001; Lupton, 1998). Research indicates, however, that 'biologically similar generalized arousal states are labelled as different emotions depending on the subjects' understanding of the situation' (Stearns and Stearns, 1985: 834). If, as Goffman (1974) suggests, situations are already defined for the individual by frames then what we recognise as specific emotions are too already organised for us. It is the argument here that emotions are thus part of a social frame; individuals both consciously and unconsciously guide their emotional behaviours according to shared 'rules' or standards. The shared rules and standards are what Hochschild (2003a; 2003b) has referred to as feeling and display rules, or as emotional dictionaries and bibles. Similarly Stearns and Stearns (1985) have labelled it 'emotionology'. Because these concepts propose that emotions operate according to 'rules', they are similar to the way 'frame' was applied within this research. The concept of 'frame' was preferred within this thesis, however, because 'frame' is an organising concept for understanding the relationship between the individual and society; the concept can thus be applied to understanding various aspects of social life. It was utilised within research in order to understand emotion – specifically love – but the theory of frame has a broader application beyond just understanding the way that emotions operate according to rules, because it conceptualises the ways in which social life is made legible and social order is stabilised and maintained. Within this

theoretical context it is possible to explore the wider contribution that emotional frames make to the legibility and maintenance of the social world.

Despite arguing that emotions are *chiefly* part of social frameworks, as with all social frames there *are* aspects of emotional experience that exist within the natural or biological order. Some aspects of emotions are likely to be mediated through bodies and their capabilities – for example, the physical production of tears is necessary for the expression of sadness through crying. Any expectations about who should and should not cry, and where and when it is appropriate to do so, however, are not governed by the physical process of producing and shedding tears. It would, therefore, be appropriate to say that ‘crying’ is part of a social frame. On occasions, however, it may also be appropriate to say that crying is part of a *natural* framework – we may produce and shed tears when the eyes are irritated, for example. What Goffman’s (1974) work articulates is that when faced with a situation – a crying individual, for example – a *judgement* has to be made about the status of that situation and an *appropriate* response chosen in order to behave in ways concordant with social expectations. In short, when faced with a crying individual we have to work out ‘what is going on here?’. Goffman argues that it is the frame that enables us to answer that question and gear our response according to ‘cultural templates of appropriate behaviour’ (Johnston, 1995: 217).

In order to work out ‘what is going on here?’ Goffman suggests that each frame has a set of decision rules for establishing or excluding its application. These decision rules take into account the context of action and not just the action itself: to continue with the example of crying, in order to place the tear-shedding as being part of the natural or social frame we may look to other aspects of the ‘scene’, such as the immediate environment, the gestures and bodily comportment of the ‘cryer’

and/or the behaviours of those around them. If we ascribe the crying to a natural frame – when we see someone weeping whilst chopping up an onion, for example – we may ignore their tears and speak to them cheerfully. If we attribute their crying to a social frame it is unlikely that we would respond in the same way. The specific context would guide our reaction and we would likely alter our behaviour accordingly. Our accurate interpretation and appropriate reaction to another's emotional expression is important because it can strengthen or undermine both the interaction and the relationship more generally. The ascription of a natural or social frame to emotional states thus has a moral dimension.

Ignoring crying, when it is part of a natural frame (as with the example of chopping an onion), is an appropriate response because both interactants are absolved of moral responsibility towards each other within this specific context. The 'crying' is perceived as being part of the natural order and the appropriateness (or not) of this behaviour is thus irrelevant; we do not judge the other's crying as being right or wrong. Similarly, the reaction (or not) to this crying is not scrutinised and there are no social expectations that care will be demonstrated towards the 'crier'. Crying – and the response to this crying – in this interactional context is amoral. Ignoring crying, when it is part of the social frame, when someone has experienced the bereavement of a family member for example, is, however, an inappropriate reaction. This context is morally loaded because both interactants are held up to the emotional standards of their society and judged accordingly. We may ask ourselves, for example, whether the person is justified in the physical expression of their emotions. Our decision is a moral one because it determines our response to the other person. If we deem that they are justified in

their behaviour we are morally obliged to behave in socially appropriate ways – failure to do so may show a lack of care for the other person.

The project applied Goffman's concept of frame to understanding emotional life because the concept goes beyond stating that there are rules of emotional conduct and standards of emotional behaviour (Hochschild, 2003a). Rather, it attends to the fact that our experience of the social world, and others within it, is contingent on our ability to (successfully) interpret what is going on in any given situation and that this interpretation occurs prior to, or concurrently with, the application of normative rules or standards; this interpretation is, most importantly, an inherently moral action. With regards to emotions this work proposes that the first stage in emotional interaction and observation is the successful recognition of another's emotional state. Without this our interactions would be clumsy or inappropriate and subject to social sanctions. We would also struggle to make our own feelings understood. My research then applied this understanding to the exploration of 'love' in particular.

Conceptualising 'love' as having an organising 'frame' allowed me to conceive of love as a concept that is shared by members of a society; that is, as something that is recognised, performed and portrayed in society according to shared notions of what love is and according to tacitly agreed upon rules. The following fundamental theoretical propositions were foundational to the work: that for someone to experience love there must be an internal understanding of one's own feelings; that in order to feel loved by another person, there must also, however, be an outward expression of these feelings; and that without a mutual understanding between interactants about what constitutes 'love' – both feelings

and behaviour – the concept would be meaningless – one or both parties would likely feel ‘unloved’. Frames make things ‘knowable’ and guide appropriate behaviour in light of this knowledge. It is argued that there are three things that a ‘love frame’ must facilitate in order for love to be a meaningful concept, these are: ways of ‘knowing’ love, ‘doing’ love and ‘recognising’ love. ‘Knowing’ love involves the successful interpretation of one’s own feelings as being ‘love’ or ‘not love’. This aspect of the frame is vital because it is on this basis that individuals choose how to behave towards others.

Once established that internally held feelings *are* love (and not some other emotion), however, one must seek to make the object of these feelings aware of them. Goffman’s (1981) sociology proposes that there are ‘standard ways’ of achieving this task and Misztal (2001: 314) argues that there are rules that

‘people use to make themselves readable for others in such a way as to make their own concerns and feelings maximally usable by others as a source of appropriate involvement’.

Likewise Goffman (1983: 51) tells us that in all interactions,

“we find ourselves with one central obligation: to render our behavior understandably relevant to what the other can come to perceive is going on. Whatever else, our activity must be addressed to the other’s mind, that is, to the other’s capacity to read our words and actions for evidence of our feelings, thoughts and intent. This confines what we say and do, but it also allows us to bring to bear all of the world to which the other can catch allusions.”

The primary reason for ‘doing’ love in a certain way, then, is because there exists an obligation to communicate one’s internally experienced emotions and beliefs in ways that make them *recognisable*. Appropriate ways of ‘doing love’ must therefore be organised by the love frame in order that actions are ‘recognised’ correctly by others. Specifically, the research attended to the question ‘what is it

that allows us to recognise in a given situation – and in ourselves – that “it is love that is going on here”?. By focusing on love, then, this work served, in one respect, as a case study for exploring the application of frame to understanding shared (emotional) life.

Conceptualising love as being part of a *social* frame enabled me to theorise the relevance of morality in discussions of love – an issue proposed as being central by various sociological theorists (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973). Within existing sociological literature on love there are claims that love is inherently moral; that its very nature is one that contains an orientation towards others that is morally good. Within this same literature, however, there is little discussion regarding the ways in which this morality is played out between people in society – conceptualising ‘love’ as a social frame provided a tool which allowed me to do this. This is because social frameworks always involve the evaluation of action which is then imputed onto a person’s character. An understanding of love as being part of a social frame does not preclude that there may be something uniquely moral about love; rather, it allows the theorist to think through this morality – or at least a dimension of it – *sociologically*. Within social frames interactions ‘in general’ are spaces of moral demand and judgement of character; researching love as a social frame, then, enabled me to explore the ways in which these moral demands and character judgements are enacted within interactions of love in particular.

Identifying and Analysing a Frame

Goffman provided no instruction about how one might go about *doing* a frame analysis (Johnston, 1995; Gamson, 1975). Manning (1980) argues that Goffman’s

own text is not even a frame analysis; rather, it is a book about 'frames' – implicit in Goffman's writing is a suggestion that frames are analysable, but he makes little suggestion about how to do this. Goffman's work tells us, however, that frames provide boundaries between activities/situations through the organisation of those situations. My research proceeded with the idea that the role of the sociologist, when engaging in a 'frame analysis', is to describe an activity/situation through the identification of the organisational features and boundaries that delimit it. These are the aspects of the situation that are common to all, or most, instances of it – they are not the idiosyncrasies that exist through the enactment of the frame by unique individuals. A frame analysis exists at the level of 'ideal-type'; the sociologist is dealing not with 'facts, but typifications' (Goffman, 1974: 14). Frame analysis is thus not a 'method' *per se*, in the same way one could say 'conversation analysis' or 'narrative analysis' are ways of approaching texts; instead it is a way of conceptualising and describing the structuring aspects of the social world – the defining feature of a frame analysis is a focus on generalisation. Consequently there appears to be no 'correct' way to analyse a frame, nor a particular method that is ideally suited to its identification.

The 'right' methods of a frame analysis seem to be the ones that are consistent with the nature of the thing to be studied. Identifying a frame when there is a physical or environmental aspect to the frame may be easier than identifying a non-physical frame, such as emotion. In the game of football, for example, the goal posts act as a target for a ball as a method of scoring points, but they also indicate the boundaries of game play – they designate a space as being distinct from the space around it and this indicates to those involved, and also those observing, that there are a particular set of rules and conventions applicable

to that demarcated space. This enables players and observers to know how to interpret particular actions and behaviours. This is true whether the goal posts are on an official pitch or are constructed in the moment by children's clothing. We could, then, say that 'goal posts' or 'demarcated space' are part of a 'football frame'. Direct observation enables us to identify this aspect of the situation; similarities between situations – in this case football games – enables us to classify this aspect of the situation as part of the frame. 'Frames' that are embedded within the physical world, then, may be best identified through observational methods that examine the common features that 'do' the work of organising the experience for those involved in the situation in some capacity.

The more an event or situation enters in to a natural frame, the more likely it is to be identifiable through observation. Identifying a frame that is not based within the physical world may be more challenging and frames that are embedded within the thoughts and behaviours of individuals may not be suited to identification through observation at all. Instead the researcher may need to speak with people *using* the frame in order to discover the 'standard doings and standard reasons for doing these doings' that are vital for meaningful communication *between* individuals within all interactions. Identifying a non-physical frame, then, may be done through questioning methods that seek to understand the shared meanings many people have about a given phenomenon. Feelings, for example, have no physical substance and cannot be seen. Nonetheless, this research proceeded on the basis that despite lacking solidity, love was still comprehensible but would need to be identified in different ways. According to Max Scheler (1992: 51),

'The relationship between expression and experience have a fundamental basis of connection, which is independent of our specifically human gestures of expression. We have here, as it were, a universal grammar, valid for all languages of expression, and the ultimate basis of understanding for all forms of mime and pantomime among living creatures.'

Scheler seems to be articulating something similar to Goffman's concept of 'frame'.

When referring to a 'relationship between expression and experience' Scheler is referring to a social process by which we both make ourselves understood, and others are rendered comprehensible. The concept of 'frame' (the existence of frames in *any* given society) is the 'universal grammar' that facilitates understanding. The shape and boundaries of the frame are the specific 'gestures of expression' particular to one society at any given moment. Scheler also argues that we can gain insight into others only insofar as 'we treat their bodies as a *field of expression* for their experiences' (Scheler, 1992: 50 emphasis in original). Bodies, then, according to Scheler, are vehicles through which we can make ourselves known and come to know others. Just as the physical environment can be a field for a frame – i.e. the football pitch and goal posts are the physical fields of the football frame, so too can bodies can be a field of expression of the non-physical frame. Individual bodies, then, may be the field of expression for the love frame. So although we cannot access the love frame 'directly' because it is not 'physical', we may be able identify a love frame by focusing on individuals as fields of expression, though this may be individual accounts of experiences rather than observation of their bodies. The specific methods used to undertake a frame analysis of love are explored in the following chapter.

Conclusions

This research proceeded on the basis that definitions of love do not spontaneously arise from individuals; rather love is 'framed' and for Goffman (1981: 68) 'framing is a social process' not a psychological one. Goffman (1981: 63, emphasis added) tells us that

'the individuals I know don't invent the world of chess when they sit down to play, or the stock market when they buy some shares, or the pedestrian traffic system when they maneuver [sic] through the streets. Whatever the idiosyncrasies of their own motives and interpretations, they must gear their participation into what is available by way of *standard doings* and standard reasons for doing these doings'.

Furthermore Goffman (1981: 68) states that 'individuals bring something of what they are and know to each of their social encounters, but that there are rules of etiquette and reference for guiding this importation'. He also tells us that 'the regulations and expectations that apply to a particular social situation are hardly likely to be generated at that moment there' (Goffman, 1983: 4). To relate this to love: yes, the individual exists with their own unique attributes *but* they must still gear their participation in a love relationship (of any kind) in a meaningful – that is standard – way. Romantic films, for example, would make little sense if there was no shared, tacitly agreed upon idea of what love 'looks like'. 'Standard doings' and 'rules of etiquette' thus become even more important when we are not involved in the action directly, but are observing, interpreting and judging it. The aim of this research was to begin a process of uncovering *sociologically* what the 'rules of

etiquette and reference[s]' are for love with a view to revealing the mutual knowledge that surrounds the emotion.

The action of 'doing' love was a key focus of this study; knowledge about what to 'do' and how to do it were not conceived of as arising from the individual, however, and were instead thought of as being informed by a *social* framework of understanding that exists outside any particular person or situation. Social frames, including the 'love frame', contain within them normative rules that guide action – providing standards of behaviour of which the individual is held accountable for sustaining in all interactions. Researching the 'love frame' explored its constitutive 'rules', in order to say something about the ways in which morality is played out within the interactions of love relationships. Moreover, as it is the proposal of some theorists that love is a moral foundation of an integrated society, understanding love is not merely a matter of understanding individual affective experience, but has the potential to forward our understanding of the morality of the society within which we live. Such issues will be taken up in the discussions within chapter seven. The following chapter explores the methodological challenges of working with the concept of frame, alongside the difficulties of researching such a generalised and widely experienced emotion as love.

Chapter Four. Researching Love: Doing a Frame

Analysis

'It is unwise and unnecessary to use difficulty as an excuse for neglect of a basic ingredient of human history [- emotion]'

–Stearns and Stearns, 1985: 832

A lot of information is provided in *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1974), about what frames are and how they operate to organise experience. The book does not, however, provide a lot, if any, information about how a researcher wishing to work with the concept would go about doing so. Without a 'guidebook' to direct the researcher, the researcher must navigate the territory on their own. Nonetheless there are some signposts within Goffman's work that can be used point the way. One of the signposts identified and used within this research was the distinction Goffman makes between natural and social frameworks. He explains that natural frames are physical 'products of nature', whilst social frames incorporate acts of will and involve 'guided doings' rather than just 'natural events' (Goffman, 1974: 22). Goffman is suggesting that what marks a social frame from a natural one is the presence of *intentionality* of behaviour from individual actors, which requires a background understanding of events and involves the presence of standards of behaviour and subject the doer to social appraisal (Goffman, 1974: 22). Exploring the 'guided doings' of social frames, then, must involve examining the rules of conduct that social actors use to understand the situations in which they find themselves and that inform their social action. It must also involve identifying

those aspects of a situation or scene that communicates to the social actor what rules are appropriate and where they are applicable.

Within this research physical and non-physical frames were also differentiated from one another because doing so allowed different methodological approaches to be evaluated according to their suitability for accessing the physical and non-physical world. 'Physical frames' are those that predominantly utilise the physical environment to indicate the boundaries of the frame. In the previous chapter 'goal posts' were used as an illustration, providing an example of a physical expression of a delimiting aspect of a frame – in that example, a football frame. Non-physical frames are those which rely on the non-physical aspects of the world to provide demarcation between one structured activity system and another. That is not to say that non-physical frames do not enter or utilise the physical world, they do; rather, the boundaries of a frame are 'virtual' until they become actualised in practise. The rules of the English language, for instance, have no material presence in the world and yet we can say they 'exist' when people use them to structure their speech acts. This, of course, necessitates entrance into the physical world through the utterance of words, which are made possible by corporeal human beings. Nonetheless 'speech', as a broad category that includes the ordering rules that structure it, cannot be reduced to mere physical vibrations of human vocal cords; 'sound' can be described as physical and as the basis for speech, but speech cannot be reduced to the physical production of sound.

The previous chapter suggested that physical frames may be identified best through observational methods but that these same methods may not be appropriate for a non-physical frame, which requires a method of questioning frame-users. Love was approached within this research, as an example of a non-

physical frame and it therefore sought to understand the shared meanings that people have about love by focusing on the *accounts* participants provided of their own 'loving' behaviour. Crook and Taylor (1980: 248) argue that 'Frame Analysis can only begin where accounts of activities begin'. This is because one of the functions of a frame is to enable individuals to 'account' for what is going on in a given situation. Exploring what individuals do when they 'do' love, and why, was thus approached by exploring what they *say* that they 'do' in order to perform love and, similarly, what behaviours people say that they 'recognise' as being 'loving'. The previous chapter argued that the love frame must first enable individuals to understand their own feelings as being love and then this knowledge guides the individual in behaving in appropriate ways towards others. Knowing love is therefore vital when seeking to 'do' love and when 'recognising' love in the behaviour of others. The key research questions were thus as follows:

1. How do we know that what we are feeling is love?
2. How do we display feelings of love to others?
3. What is it in the 'displays' of others that we recognise as being love?

The answers given to these questions have constituted the 'love frame' as it is presented in this thesis. I understood my role as sociologist to be one that discovered the features common to all (or most) accounts and then to re-present this data as a coherent picture of the 'love frame'. Chapter five is this re-presentation. This chapter begins with a discussion of the research strategy applied when designing the project and the methods of data collection and analysis used throughout the research process. This discussion describes three methods of data collection and each is described in turn. Secondly the issues of sampling and recruitment are explored through a further discussion of the defining feature of a

frame analysis: typification through commonality. Finally the ethical considerations that informed the research are described and an evaluation of the process of doing a 'frame analysis' is provided.

Methods of data generation and analysis

When individuals provide the means of data generation, and this process is 'used to produce social scientific accounts of social life by drawing on the concepts and meanings used by social actors, and the activities in which they engage', an abductive research strategy is being utilised (Blaikie, 1993: 176). Blaikie (1993: 176) suggests that abductive research is most often associated with interpretivism in which the

'major task' is to 'discover why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings, intentions and rules, which provide the orientations for their actions'.

The major task of this research was to uncover the tacit, mutual knowledge and rules that orientate people's *loving* behaviours. An abductive strategy, then, seemed appropriate.

With regards to research process, abduction requires the researcher to explore the everyday concepts and meanings that guide people's action and interactions. This is done through the production of data that is generated either through purposive or naturally occurring interactions with research participants, or through observations of them (Blaikie, 1993). Theory is then generated through immersion in these accounts/researcher observations and theories are constructed and grounded in everyday meaning and understanding; lay and technical language are synthesised in order to explain phenomena (Blaikie, 2000). These social scientific descriptions can then be understood in relation to existing

theory, or they can be the building blocks of new theory building. An abductive research strategy was adopted within this project and the 'social scientific descriptions' of 'love' were used as a way of interrogating existing perspectives *and* as an original contribution to theory (Blaikie, 1993: 177). Although an *approach* to research cannot be adequately labelled 'qualitative' or 'quantitative' these terms are helpful when discussing methods for data generation (Blaikie, 2000; 1993). The strong distinction made between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' data collection/generation and analysis has previously resulted in a 'paradigm wars' (Bryman, 2008). In practice, however, the dichotomic relationship between quantitative and qualitative data is often somewhat of a 'caricature' (Bryman, 2008), and it is felt that, in agreement with David Silverman (2000), methodological decisions should be based on what one is trying to ascertain, rather than because of a strict adherence to one epistemological position. Jane Ritchie (2003) argues that qualitative data is required only under certain conditions. Those conditions that were relevant to this research are outlined below.

Understanding Context or Process

Firstly, Ritchie suggests that qualitative data is helpful when the major purpose of the research is to understand context or a social process. According to Thomas Scheff (2006), Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974) can be understood best by conceptualising the notion of 'frame' as being analogous to 'context'. Qualitative data generation and analysis was therefore considered to be appropriate when taking a frame analytic approach to social life.

Ill-defined or not well understood subject matter

Secondly, Ritchie points out that the nature of qualitative research allows for a greater depth of inquiry – something that is vital when the research topic is poorly defined or not well-understood. It was felt that love is largely tacitly understood and as such remains ill-defined. Qualitative research was considered vital in order to present an empirically-grounded understanding of love.

Subject matter is deeply rooted in personal knowledge

It is also suggested that when the subject area is ‘deeply rooted in the participants’ personal knowledge or understanding of themselves’ (Ritchie, 2003:31) a qualitative mode of research is the most appropriate way to gather information. Primarily because it is in-depth, it is flexible and provides the potential for rapport and interactivity between the researcher and the researched. This also links to two further conditions that Ritchie outlines: *for the investigation of delicate or intangible subjects; and/or when the subject matter is sensitive*. These were all aspects that needed to be taken into consideration with regards to love because it is a non-physical phenomenon and one which may be considered highly personal. During the research design I was concerned that participants’ demonstrations of love may be difficult to reflect upon and articulate –because of the nature of love itself, but also because of the nature of frames (1974). Frames are, most often, unconsciously drawn upon and used, and they may therefore be difficult to articulate; ‘[participants may] need continuing help in moving below initial or stylised responses to reach knowledge that ...has remained largely unconscious.’ Ritchie (2003: 32). A method was needed that could attend to these concerns. The in-depth and flexible nature of qualitative research provided a solution to the research complexities noted above, primarily by fostering relationships of trust

through time spent with and responding to participants. Three methods of data generation were used in the course of this research: qualitative interviewing, focus group discussions and qualitative questionnaires; their uses evolved through reflexively engaging with the data, and methods of gathering this data, throughout the research process.

Qualitative Interviewing

Qualitative interviewing, which often refers to in-depth unstructured or semi-structured interviews, has been referred to as 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess, in Byrne, 2004: 181). The purpose being that through the process of discussing (at length), attitudes towards a particular topic or range of topics may be expressed and recorded for analysis. The non-standardised nature of semi-structured interviews provides a level of depth and complexity that cannot be achieved in standardised interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow specific questions to be introduced into the dialogue at a conversationally appropriate time, whilst still allowing participants to direct the overall structure of the conversation/interview; as a flexible medium they allow participants some freedom to 'speak in their own voices and with their own language' (Byrne, 2004: 182) whilst simultaneously allowing the interaction to remain thematic and topic-centred (Mason, 1996). Thus non-standardised, semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to provide an element of flexibility and 'space' within which participants could communicate their personal accounts of love. It was hoped that with this approach it would be able to focus the conversation to a particular topic – or aspect of a topic – whilst allowing participants to control what they say and when.

Allowing interviewees to participate in directing the interview was important because it provided them with a degree of autonomy and choice about what to disclose and when. It was felt that this choice helped to mediate some of the ethical issues involved in discussing a potentially sensitive subject matter: when flexibility is built in to the interview design the interviewer is able to respond better to subtle variations in people's behaviour which may indicate their discomfort or desire to change the conversation. With this in mind, an interview *guide*, as opposed to a standardised schedule, was created and consisted of a number of questions that were used to prompt discussion¹⁵.

Initially it was felt that, provided the participants remained on topic, questioning would be largely reactive and participants would direct much of the interview. In reality, however, there were few deviations from the interview guide, potentially because participants did struggle to answer the questions, articulating that they felt some questions were 'hard to answer'. Common responses, at least initially, followed a pattern similar to 'Um, I don't know ... I suppose ...'. None of the participants failed to or refused to answer a question but they did find them challenging – some much more so than others. That being said, a couple of participants were happy and able to talk at length and, at times, on only partially related topics. The interview guide was help helpful at these moments in bringing the interview back into focus. The flexibility built in to the guide meant that it *was* possible to follow the respondents lead regarding question order, for example, but also to pick up on and explore unexpected issues whilst remaining purposeful regarding the data required.

¹⁵ A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix iii

In order to explore the tangible manifestations of love – not just within face-to-face interaction but between other people, including within cultural representations of love – the interviews began with a discussion of ‘examples’ of love. Cultural representations of love necessarily draw on (or potentially construct?) the frame of love so that they are meaningful to the audience engaging with them. Prior to the interview all participants were invited to identify cultural ‘examples’ of love and to minimise researcher bias participants were asked to select these examples themselves. For the purpose of clarity, however, some guidance was given regarding where they might ‘look’: films, television, literature, for example. This was a voluntary exercise; five of the seven participants chose to bring an illustration. These illustrations are described in the following chapter. Following a discussion of the example, in which participants explained their reasons for selection, each person was asked to note down who and/or what they love(d). This was primarily for the purposes of enabling the participants to think about love in its broadest sense. The questions asked in the interview were focused on ‘occasions’ and participants found it helpful to refer back to their mind map in order to recall occasions. Drawing on the content of the mind map also enabled questions to be tailored to each participant.

Seven interviews were completed in total and these were conducted in a location that was chosen by the participants so that they would feel as comfortable as possible. All the interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes though the interview ended only when the questions had been answered and when it was felt that the discussion had reached its natural conclusion. The interviews were voice recorded (with the respondents’ permission) and the facility to take notes was available. Note-taking was, however, used sparingly; it was felt that a more natural

conversational interaction, alongside the maintenance of appropriate eye contact, more easily fostered rapport and trust between participant and researcher and this was an important ethical factor.

After completing and analysing these seven interviews it was felt, at the time, that the data generated had not fully addressed some aspects of the research questions. Most of the participants found it difficult to discuss their 'behaviours' around love, or explain why they felt loved by other people – identifying concrete aspects of behaviour, communication and interaction was challenging for them. Much of the data generated was very personal and much of the discussion focused on 'feelings' (rather than behaviours). This was felt to be problematic because the research questions wanted to explore action rather than feeling. This is because feelings can remain a personal experience, but what creates and maintains *relationships* is the communication of these feelings *between* people. The behavioural cues of others were considered a constitutive part of the love frame. Moreover, in cultural products such as films and television programmes actors need to be able to demonstrate loving behaviour without necessarily feeling loving feelings. The *enactment* of emotion must, therefore, be separate (or at least distinguishable) from one's feelings. For these reasons focus group research was also explored as an additional or alternative method.

Focus Groups

Whilst planning the research focus groups had been considered as a research method because they can be helpful when attempting to understand social phenomena, especially in 'defining terms, raising themes for inclusion..., [and] assessing participants' understanding of key concepts and language' (Tonkiss, 2004: 196). Despite these benefits it was felt that the very personal nature of the

subject matter meant that group interviews had the potential to be ethically problematic, and may also have inhibited data generation. There was a concern that participants may feel disinclined to discuss very personal experiences and/or feelings in the company of a group, leading to only superficial data being generated, or to respondents feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable. Focus groups were reconsidered, however, in order to access data that was not based solely on personal experience and feelings. It was hoped, therefore, that the interactive nature of focus groups would enable individuals to discuss the *shared* aspects of love and not those personal to the individual or their experiences. Barbour and Kitzinger's (1999) work affirms this when they suggest that whilst interviews are good for tapping in to individual narratives, focus groups are useful for exploring knowledge or ideas in a social context. Goss and Leinbach (1996: 115) also suggest that "stories" produced in the collaborative performance of a focus group better reflect the social nature of knowledge'.

In defining focus groups researchers have suggested that 'focus groups are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. The group is "focused" in that it involves some kind of collective activity' (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999: 4). They are different to group interviews because data is generated through group *interaction* rather than by individuals who are merely in the presence of other people. That being said the presence of other people is an important aspect of focus group research because the other participants act as an 'audience' for one another (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). Wilkinson (1998) argues that the focus group method is distinctive because of this data collection procedure, and the interactive data it generates. Proponents of focus groups suggest that the method is ideal for exploring people's attitudes, opinions, experiences, knowledge, beliefs

and concerns (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999; Wilkinson, 1998). Moreover it also allows these discussions to remain grounded in participants own language (Wilkinson, 1998).

Although focus groups can be used as a standalone method, their use with other methods is 'highly productive' (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999: 5). Similarly Wilkinson (1998: 185) claims that using focus groups as an adjunct to other methods can add 'richness and depth to a project' by allowing participants to develop ideas collectively – an especial advantage when other methods are quantitative in nature or are conducted on an individual basis. When focus group discussions were first included as a research method the intention was to use them as a standalone method. After holding two groups, however, their use as an 'alongside' method was trialled and they were used in combination with a qualitative questionnaire. The use of the questionnaire prior to participating in the group discussion appeared to be helpful in orientating participants to the topic.

Although the decision to use focus groups was made in order to access collective understandings of love, rather than just individual experiences, it was likely that people would feel it necessary to provide examples of love from their own experiences in order to illustrate their points of discussion. For this reason it was felt that some familiarity between participants would be beneficial. This meant accessing 'naturally-occurring groups'; this was very loosely defined and it did not have to be a group of people who met regularly, just one which comprised of people who had some connection to one another. Each focus group was different in size and this was largely because individuals were invited to put together their own focus groups. Because the 'lead participant' had knowledge of others who may be interested and would also have knowledge about existing relationships between

others, it was hoped that this would lead to the formation of a group that felt comfortable with one another. Practically it also was very helpful because recruitment was done by the 'lead' research participant instead of through the researcher, via artificial channels.

Five focus groups were conducted in total and each of them consisted of a group of people already known to each other. It was requested that the groups be made up of between four and eight people because the existing literature on focus group research proposes that these numbers are ideal (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). Although there was an awareness that allowing participants to put together their own groups may lead to homogeneity of group members – a potential disadvantage according to 'traditional' sampling approaches – the comfort levels of the participants was considered to be more important in this circumstance, firstly because love has the potential to be a sensitive issue, but secondly because the defining feature of frame analysis is the focus on commonality of experience and understanding.

The smallest group consisted of four people and the remaining three contained eight people per group. Three were held in the homes of the participant organising/convening the group, with the aim of putting participants at ease by allowing them to meet in a place already known to them. The other two focus groups were conducted in a further education college because the participants were students at this college. These two focus groups were done as class discussions (for those that wished to take part) in two separate classes. These were both 'naturally-occurring' in that they were in regular contact with one another, and at the same time they were brought together artificially through college timetabling. Nonetheless, the students seemed comfortable with one

another and existing friendships between group members were referenced as part of the discussions.

The focus group discussions were interesting and provided rich descriptive accounts. Because the discussions focused on feelings rather than behaviours, additional research methods were also explored in order to test whether more focused data on love could be generated. Qualitative questionnaires were chosen, initially for use alongside focus groups, but then also as a standalone method.

Qualitative Questionnaires

All research questions, no matter how they are administered, constitute a form of interpersonal communication between the researcher, who asks the questions, and the respondent, who answers them (Peterson, 2000). At the outset of the research project there was a desire to avoid any method that minimised creation of rapport with participants; love has the potential to be a sensitive subject and by remaining responsive and flexible to respondents within face to face interaction it was hoped that this would minimise participant discomfort. Nonetheless it was felt that qualitative questionnaire administration had value because they could facilitate respondents answering questions in a focused way, whilst providing time and space to think through their ideas before answering. Unlike individual interviews or focus group discussions, most questionnaires provide structured questioning and this avoids tangential discussions or idiosyncratic research accounts (Peterson, 2000). This is because the questions are written and provided for the participant *before* administration. Questionnaires are thus led less by participants than other methods may be and this is why they were trialled within this research.

A potential drawback to questionnaires is that spontaneous inclusion of relevant information may be limited if it is not directly drawn out within the questioning; asking open-ended questions may reduce this risk, however (Peterson, 2000). Open-ended questions permit (and encourage) respondents to answer a question in any way they deem appropriate and 'permits one to understand the world as seen by the respondent' (Labuschagne, 2003: 102). Peterson suggests that open-ended questioning is used in five distinct ways: when a researcher does not know how participants will answer a question; when the researcher wants to minimise the risk of missing relevant information; when information on certain kinds of variables are required (i.e. asking for illustrative examples of a phenomenon); when following up a closed question in order to explicate the answer further; and when monitoring trends over time, especially when unanticipated events may impact on the answers participants provide. The first four reasons for the use of open-ended questioning were relevant within this study.

It was not known what participants wanted to say and so providing predetermined answers would not have provided relevant or useful information. Similarly relevant data may have been missed due to an inability to anticipate all possible responses. Importantly, examples of loving and 'non-loving' behaviours were desired and closed questioning would have been inadequate at capturing this data. It is acknowledged that refusal rates do tend to be higher than with closed-ended questions because open-ended questions take more time and effort to complete (Peterson, 2000). Open-ended questions also have a tendency to be vaguer than closed questions and thus the opportunity for misunderstanding what information the researcher wants is greater. Nonetheless the freedom of response

associated with open-ended questioning was so necessary for this research that the usefulness of a questionnaire with predominantly predetermined questions/choices would have been extremely limited.

Sixteen questionnaires were given out to all the participants taking part in the two focus groups at the further education college. The questionnaire was used to get the participants thinking about the topic. Six questionnaires were also given to students who chose not to take part in the group discussion. All twenty two were completed and returned. In order to trial the questionnaires as a standalone method twenty four questionnaires were emailed out to potential participants; only three were returned. The questionnaire was formatted so that participants could fill it in and return it electronically or complete it in person. It was hoped that this would be convenient for participants and thereby increase the chances of response and return. The low response rate of 13% suggested that if this method was to be used within future research projects, methods of distribution would need to be carefully considered to boost the response rate.

The response rate was 100% when giving potential participants paper copies to fill in because giving out paper questionnaires enabled individuals to fill it in within the presence of the researcher and return it immediately. The questionnaires filled in electronically were, however, done much more comprehensively and all the answers were more developed. Those people that completed it with the researcher in attendance did so in order to return it immediately – despite the fact that they were invited to take it away and return at a later date. This added an additional time pressure and likely led to less developed answers being given. Balancing a greater/lesser response rate with greater/less

developed answer completion would certainly be something to consider if using this method again in the future.

The questionnaire itself¹⁶ was six pages long and this was primarily to give participants enough space to write down the answers to the questions. There were seven questions, though three of these questions contained further sub-questions, used to develop previously given answers or different aspects of the same topic. I used a combination of closed and open questioning. Closed questions were useful in ascertaining definitive answers. Questions such as 'do you think there are different types of love?' were then followed up with an open question, so that I could understand the participants' reasoning behind the answers they gave. Peterson (2000) argues that closed and open ended questions can often complement one another when used in this way.

Without any specific guidance from Goffman about how to do a 'frame analysis', this research was free to choose any method that was deemed appropriate. In the midst of a wide selection of choices, working out how best to collect data was, however, like selecting a list of ingredients without a recipe. This was a challenging aspect of the work but one that was overcome by 'trailing' a number of different methods in order to generate the data necessary for a frame analysis. This was informed, in part, by previous experience. Prior to undertaking this PhD a small amount of qualitative research as part of an undergraduate piece of research had been performed. Interviews had been conducted with ten individuals, exploring attitudes about romantic love. This approach seemed fruitful and so when looking at different research methods individual interviews seemed a relevant and helpful research method. It was also informed by formal research

¹⁶ A copy of which can be found in the Appendices – Appendix iii.

methods training. The additional methods used were selected because they were in line with the aims of the research and with a clear understanding of the data to be generated.

Data Analysis

In line with the abductive research strategy adopted within this research, qualitative textual analysis was used as a method of sorting out the data. Blaikie (2000) argues that qualitative textual analysis is closely aligned with the abductive research strategy because theoretical articulations come directly from the data and no theoretical ideas are articulated outside of their existence within the text. The analysis was thematic in its orientation in order to remain consistent with a frame analytic approach: qualitative thematic analysis is effective in identifying 'themes, patterns, processes and relationships' in data (Hodkinson, 2008: 87) and this was necessary to identify the ideal-typical characteristics of love, whilst remaining embedded within the accounts of the participants.

The previous chapter explained that Goffman's concept of frame was utilised as a way of conceptualising the relationship between shared knowledge and praxis. This was because the concept of frame allows one to think about love, not as an individual phenomenon, but as one guided by shared interactional and 'situational proprieties' (Goffman, 1972) and at the same time, acknowledge that it is individuals who enact it. Goffman's focus in *Frame Analysis* is the ways that 'mundane activity [is] characterized by stable rules of operation and understanding' (Gonos, 2000: 36) rather than the moment-to-moment construction and reconstruction of reality like that found within other perspectives. Adequately describing frames, then, must be done by analysing and describing their stable rules of application and operation (Gonos, 2000). Gonos

here implies that when attempting to identify and analyse a frame, through whatever particular method, it is important to look for continuity and similarity between situations in which the frame is having a structuring effect. Consequently, it was important that the analysis of the data was the basis of subsequent theoretical arguments, but that these arguments were based upon the common ideas between all accounts. Qualitative thematic analysis involves organising the ideas contained within various accounts according to similarities and differences between them; Clive Seale (2004) describes this process of qualitative coding as an exercise in 'purposive indexing'.

Analysis began through the process of transcription because transcription itself is not a neutral process, but one in which decisions are made about how to represent what was said. Although considered time-consuming and laborious, verbatim transcription was used as it allowed for all possible analytic uses (Fielding and Thomas, 2008). That being said, the *content* of the data, rather than its form, was considered to be of greatest importance within this research. This was because the research wanted to capture what *ideas* are held in common between people. It was therefore more important *what* people said, rather than the way people said it. That is not to say that the patterned ways in which people accomplish love within speech was not of interest or importance, rather it was not the focus of this research project. Future work may find this level of analysis fruitful in understanding the act of loving through talking. Despite focusing on the content of talk, both speech and non-speech-sounds were transcribed, though this was not at a level of detail as would be required for methods such as conversation analysis, for example. All transcription was carried out by the researcher. This had the benefit of being less expensive than 'contracting out', but also had the

advantage of immersing the researcher in the text and this was the first stage in the textual analysis. Transcription enabled me to become familiar with the texts and ideas that were repeated were noted at this stage of the analysis. Transcription was obviously unnecessary for the data generated through the qualitative questionnaires but the same process of looking for repeated ideas was performed on these documents.

When the texts had been generated through transcription, the data from all sources – individual interviews, focus group discussions and the qualitative questionnaires – was then ‘reduced’ via a process of qualitative coding. This involved the construction of categories and sub-categories that captured key ideas and representations, this is known as open coding; this was then followed by a process of axial coding, in which relationships between the categories and sub-categories were established. Blaikie (2000: 236) describes this as ‘putting the data back together in a new way’. Coding categories were then created and a ‘descriptive narrative ... constructed around it’ (Blaikie, 2000: 239). New coding categories were added when the existing categories became inadequate. Open coding was done through identifying repeated ideas by reading and re-reading the texts. These ideas were then noted down on the transcribed texts/qualitative questionnaires. Coding was done by-hand and without using qualitative data analysis software, such as NVivo. It was felt that the use of such software may run the risk of ‘fracturing’ the text. Because the data set was relatively small, it was felt that the possible limitations outweighed the potential benefits such software programmes offer, and so was avoided on this basis.

When this stage was complete these annotations were transferred from the texts onto individual notes. These notes were then organised into categories and

sub-categories by identifying similarities and differences. When ideas did not fit in to emerging categories, new categories were created. Sometimes one category became multiple categories; on occasion multiple categories were collapsed under one thematic heading. When all the textual annotations had been organised, no new categories were emerging and existing categories remained static, the texts were re-read in light of these thematic categories in order to make sure that there was congruence between the data and the thematic ideas generated through analysis. Each of these collections of ideas was developed by providing a narrative description of each category. Extracts of the texts have been used as evidence for the existence of the thematic ideas within the data when presenting the research findings. The thematic ideas developed in the process of analysis are described in the following chapter.

Sampling and Recruitment

Sampling

The aim of this research was explorative; it also intended to be rich in detail. The sample to be studied, therefore, was necessarily small – primarily due to the practical aspects associated with data generation and analysis. Blaikie (2000) suggests that small, non-probability samples are appropriate when the research does not need to, or cannot, be generalised to the whole population. Although this is a criticism levied at small-scale qualitative research, Blaikie maintains that it is ‘better to have some knowledge that is restricted...than to have no knowledge of the topic at all’ (Blaikie, 2000: 203). Erich Fromm (1995: 84) suggests that ‘there is hardly anybody who has not had this experience [of loving] in a rudimentary way, at least, as a child, an adolescent, an adult’. In agreement with his analysis, it was

felt that there are very few people who have no experience of love. There were, therefore, very few people who would not have been able to participate in the research and subsequently there were very few sampling restrictions – even those who may profess to having no experience of love would have been able to contribute, as they would still be drawing on the same frame of reference to interpret their own lack of love. The lack of specific sampling criteria did mean that purposive sampling was challenging.

There was also a desire to ‘avoid selecting people as tokens of categories’ (Miller, 2008: 300). Miller suggests that traditional categories such as class, gender, sexual preference, for example, are no longer adequate to describe the people that researchers meet. Not only are these categories not suitable, Miller also claims they are unhelpful because ‘categories create assumptions’ (Miller, 2008: 4). He recommends that researchers ‘acknowledge generalisations and categories when they emerge, but to at least not to start from these’ (Miller, 2008: 4). Instead he suggests that generalisations need to emerge from the data where appropriate, because it may be that generalisations occur around different orientations (for example, a love of sport) rather than the classifications usually used within the social sciences. It is acknowledged, however, that an ad-hoc approach to sampling may be problematic. Nonetheless, there were no specific necessary characteristics or attributes that a participant must have or not have in order to talk about their experiences of love – as noted they need not even have experienced ‘love’, as their opinions will be as equally insightful as those who have – and therefore it was intended that a ‘relevant range’ of participants would be included in order to provide some variation within the sample (Mason, 1996).

In recognising different approaches to sampling, Jennifer Mason (1996) discusses a 'relevant range' approach in which a number of people are chosen based on broad indicators of identity such as age, sex, gender and ethnicity. This research was exploratory and so did not wish to hypothesise about which, if any, social demographic characteristics would be significant in shaping understandings or practices of love. Moreover, it is felt that 'identity' cannot be reduced to one, or a number, of social-demographic characteristics, such as age or gender. Instead it is felt that identities are fluid, multiple and contested, and that social attributes intersect in dynamic and complex ways. Agreement is made with Mason who notes that commonly defined 'variables' (such as age, sex, socio-economic background) can often be too static and one-dimensional to be conceptually rich and meaningful. In order to avoid an 'ad-hoc' range (Mason, 1996), however, some judgement needs to be made about whom to include – though as Mason notes, what constitutes a *relevant* range will not be known at the onset. For this reason the sample wanted to encapsulate some diversity without claiming to represent the wider population statistically.

Some demographic information was collected from participants should research monitoring become necessary¹⁷. Some characteristics of identity, such as age, gender, ethnic background and sexual orientation were collected as part of the research monitoring; these were not, however, analysed as part of the respondent's accounts. Instead they were available for analysis if necessary. As noted above, however, my research interest was for ideas held in common *despite* differences between people not similarities because of them. At the outset it was estimated that the sample would consist of approximately thirty people, all taking

¹⁷ A copy of the 'Research Monitoring Form' can be found in Appendix iv. Completion of this form was not a condition of participation.

part in individual interviews. Practical aspects of researching (such as interview length), alongside theoretical considerations that were at the time unknown, were both considered to be vital in determining final sample size. It was not known whether analysis or theory building would have any impact on the sample size or direction of the research, though of course it became apparent that it did. Sampling was therefore considered to be a flexible process to be engaged with throughout the research.

At the conclusion of the fieldwork the sample consisted of:

- 7 individual interviews
- 5 focus group discussions and
- 25 completed questionnaires.

It is interesting note that the final sample consisted of both men and women of varying ages – the youngest participant was sixteen years old and the eldest was eighty two years old; there were married people, those in co-habiting relationships, those in non-co-habiting relationships, people who were divorced and people who were single. There were people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and participants who identified themselves as non-heterosexual. There were two people who considered themselves to have an impairment/disability. Overall the sample appeared diverse, despite not being purposively sampled to be so.

It was important that each particular person within this study was *not* seen as representing every member of the population with similar characteristics. As a researcher *who* the participants are, their unique characteristics, were not as important as what they provided *access* to: the frame.

'My plea then is not that one should not see that it is persons with unique biographies who do the interacting, but that one should move on from this warming fact to try to uncover the principled ways in which such personal histories are given place, and the framework of normative understandings this implies; which of course brings us back to patterns and structures'.

– Goffman, 1981: 62

Patterned narratives of love rather than individual biographies were the specific subject of interest within this research. Goffman (1981: 68) proposes that 'certainly individuals bring something of who they are and what they know to their encounters, but there are rules of etiquette and reference for guiding this importation.' The research, then, aimed to focus on the 'rules of etiquette and reference' for love rather than the particular ways in which individuals make love their own. It was not the individual *qua* individual that was of interest; rather, it was the individual as 'frame user' that was significant. Thus, identifying the love frame relied on individual 'frame users' but did so by looking for similarities and continuities between their accounts and not at individual biographies. Therefore *modest* claims are being made about the theoretical generalisability of the research. This study aimed to provide an empirical basis from which further, more focused research can be developed.

Despite the fact that there are few people who can be excluded from the research for theoretical reasons (for example, limited knowledge of the subject matter), a decision was made to exclude children between the ages of 0-16. Children may be considered a vulnerable group. Love may also be considered a sensitive subject matter and whilst the views of children and young people would no doubt be of value, it was felt that their opinions would be best accessed through

research specifically designed to address the varying needs of different age groups, alongside specifically addressing ethical issues such as the age at which consent can be considered 'informed'. Young people aged 16 and 17 were included, however, despite not legally considered to be adults. This was because young people from the age of 16 are considered old enough to decide whether to engage in sexual activity. Sexuality (including sexual activity) is similar to 'love' with regards its potentially sensitive nature. There is also some overlap between the spheres of 'love' and 'sexuality'. It was felt that people of this age group should be given the option to participate if they wished.

Recruitment

Recruitment occurred in a number of ways. The first pilot interviews were done with acquaintances who knew that the topic being researched was 'love' and had shown an interest in participating. Each person was given an invitation to participate and these were slightly different depending on the method of participation (see appendix i for an example) and then upon confirmation of their desire to take part, they were given a participant information and consent form (see appendix ii) and interviews or focus groups were scheduled or questionnaires were given out. Not all those who showed initial interest chose to take part.

Although it had not been the initial intention to use a snowballing recruitment strategy, following each interview, people suggested further potential participants. Because the sampling criteria were minimal this recruitment strategy was followed until it no longer proved useful. It was, however, a productive method of recruiting participants. With regards to the individual interviews, three people were recruited through an association with one interviewee. Similarly, focus groups were set up with people who knew or were acquainted with each other. As

noted above, the groups were participant-formed in order to ensure that conversation was as comfortable and as possible.

There were a number of benefits to the snowballing approach: people were usually familiar with the topic already; participants made it known that they had enjoyed their research experience and shared it with their friends/families/colleagues – this led to (the appearance at least of) less reticence about participating. In group situations people were familiar with one another and so conversation flowed well. It also meant that individuals felt able to challenge one another's opinions/positions and felt happy to draw on past experiences to illustrate their points – other group members often already knew about these and so were able to contribute, add additional/forgotten information/interpretation. It may also have contributed to a sense of 'safety' regarding the sharing of personal information. Some participants were able to draw on relationships they had with other people who had/were going to participate and this seemed to help them think through the complex ideas that were being discussed. Logistically it was also much easier to co-ordinate people who were used to socialising with one another. Although snowball sampling proved valuable, some 'gaps' within the sample were identified, despite it being minimal. Male participants and young people were underrepresented towards the end of the fieldwork period. A purposive recruitment strategy was then needed. This involved targeting recruitment at specific groups.

Community groups and organisations, such as Sure Start centres were approached and research literature was made available to its service users¹⁸. No individuals or groups were accessed this way, however. 'Male-only' groups such as

¹⁸ Examples of the research recruitment poster can be found in Appendix v.

those run specifically for fathers were also approached and invited to participate. This was done via email because, as a female researcher, it was felt that it would have been inappropriate to 'intrude' on a male-only space. I therefore wrote to the organisers of the groups and included information about the research and what participation involved. Offers to meet with these groups were made in order explain the research if they felt that would be more appropriate. Unfortunately, however, no communication was received from any of these groups.

Accessing young people was more successful, as a Further Education school agreed to facilitate me meeting with their pupils and offering the choice to participate. Initially a number of senior staff members were spoken to and their advice was sought regarding eliciting consent and parental involvement. It was felt by the school that seeking written parental consent was not necessary and I was comfortable to be guided by them on this matter. The school arranged for two classes containing male and female students aged over 16 to take part in the research discussions. In return they requested that I did a short talk on the use of different methods within social research. This was done during the same visit.

Ethical Considerations

According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 'research ethics' refers to the moral principles guiding the research process from inception to completion and beyond. As already stated, it was felt that extra care should be taken in the undertaking of this research due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topic. Beyond this issue of due sensitivity, however, particular attention was paid to the matters of informed consent, participant anonymity, confidentiality and data handling and storage. These were dealt with in accordance with the British

Sociological Associations Guidelines for ethical conduct in research. The issue of informed consent is often prioritised within sociological research, but as Shaw (2003) notes the notion of informed consent is somewhat 'hazardous' in relation to qualitative research. This is because it 'implies that the researcher knows *before* the event...what the event will be and its possible effects' (Eisner, 1991 in Shaw, 2003: 15, emphasis in original) and when undertaking non-standardised qualitative research this is often not the case. Despite the problems that can be associated with the notion of 'informed' consent it was felt to be a central and important ethical consideration.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Associated with voluntary participation and informed consent is the use of incentives (large incentivisation could be seen as a draw for participation, particularly for individuals with a low-income). No incentives were offered in the course of this research for this reason. All potential participants were invited to ask questions and decide whether to take part both prior to and after being given (and completing) the consent form. They were made aware that discussions of the subject may be of a sensitive nature and that they were not obliged to answer any question with which they felt uncomfortable; participation in the research was not affected by such a decision. These issues were communicated via the 'Information and Consent Form' that was given to all respondents prior to the interview commencing, a copy of which was retained by both the researcher and the participant. It was felt that both initial *and* continued consent are vital and so, alongside the consent form, verbal consent was gained prior to any research-focused discussion. Consent was not conceived of as a one-off event but an ongoing process of negotiation and dialogue and this was kept

in mind throughout the research process and at every interaction with participants as part of the reflexive practice of research.

Potential participants were not required to decide whether to participate upon first contact. In fact many people indicated an interest in taking part and chose not to do so. Sometimes reasons were offered for non-participation: for example, work and family commitments led to people not committing to a time to be interviewed. Other people offered no reason for choosing not to participate; especially those who had agreed to participate by filling in the electronic questionnaire. Participants were also able to withdraw from the study at any time during the fieldwork period and to do so without having to provide a reason and without negative consequences. No-one chose to withdraw their participation or contribution. Participants were also invited, though not mandated, to access a copy of their interview/focus group transcript for respondent validation. The research wanted to remain user-led and so this option was made available to participants but was not given routinely. In the case of respondent validation it was important that participants were able to read and understand the transcripts in order to *meaningfully* judge whether they reflected what was communicated during the interview. Verbatim transcription can look disjointed, inarticulate and incoherent when translated from natural speech to written prose (Poland, 2003) and so the transcripts were refined and certain details omitted in the interest of readability (for example, the removal of 'ums' and other pause-fillers). None of the participants chose to access their transcripts.

At the conclusion of the fieldwork and analysis, participants were sent a summary report¹⁹ containing the main findings of the research. It was hoped that

¹⁹ A copy of which can be found at Appendix vi.

this would enable them to position their own experiences and accounts within a much wider social context – one of the aims of the research was to understand the social context in which people experience love and so this was felt to be of especial import. Following receipt of the summary report participants were invited to make final amendments to their transcripts and/or withdraw if they wished. All respondents were given a date beyond which they could no longer withdraw or make amendments. Prior to this date both verbal and written consent were (re)gained to make sure participants felt comfortable with their involvement in the research and their (anonymised) data being included within the final thesis. Had participants wished to withdraw from the research, time would have been required to alter the thesis – for example the removal of direct quotations. It was therefore felt to be reasonable to provide a deadline for withdrawal, provided every effort had been made to re-attain informed consent for the use of participants' data.

Participant anonymity was felt to be of especial importance when using extracts of speech in the presentation of data. Data has only been used for the purposes of the research and all information has been presented in such a way that participants cannot be identified. When transcribing the audio recordings no names, ages or other overtly identifying information (such as the name of a relative) were recorded onto paper. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure as much anonymity as possible; these pseudonyms remain in alignment, however, with the participant's gender and ethnic background so as to minimize the distortion of the data. Some biographical data has been used where appropriate in order to contextualise what has been said, but remains general enough so that no particular individual can easily be identified. Pseudonyms were researcher-

generated as it was felt that participants may inadvertently choose names (for example, childhood nicknames) that would allow them to be recognised by others who know them.

Alongside theoretical 'handling' of the data, the safe storage of data was an important ethical issue. Storage of the data complied with the Data Protection Act 1998 and was secure. With that in mind, measures taken to ensure that data was safely stored include the encryption of data; using password-protected devices for the temporary storage of data; the use of locked cabinets for paper materials (with access limited to the researcher and relevant administration staff within the School of Sociology and Social Policy) and performing all analysis and storage on the University's secure servers.

Evaluating the research

The claims one can make about their analyses are important aspects of research and there are multiple criteria available for judging research. Which constitute the 'best' criteria is heavily debated, and this is especially true when discussing qualitative or interpretive data and research (Bryman, 2004). Lincoln (1995) argues that the criteria for judging the quality of research is fluid and has suggested ways to judge research that transcends the traditional criteria of validity, reliability and objectivity.

Evaluating the research using external criteria

Lincoln (1995) argues that four criteria have traditionally guided conventional (that is scientific) inquiry. These are the criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. Lincoln argues, however, that validity, reliability and objectivity were developed for an empiricist philosophy of research, which

was primarily concerned with procedural and methodological rigor. Whilst not wholly rejecting their uses, Lincoln suggests that distinct criteria should be used to assess the value of qualitative methods and the data it produces. She, therefore, proposes parallel criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Alongside these, she argues for the inclusion of a fifth criterion related to research authenticity. She classifies these criteria as judgments of trustworthiness, rather than of rigor. Given the qualitative nature of the study, these principles were thought to lend themselves well to assessing and evaluating this research project. The following section of the chapter provides an outline of these principles and then critically applies them to the empirical research contained within this project.

Credibility regards whether the researcher has received a 'credible' and confirmable account from those researched (Bryman, 2004). This, it is suggested, involves meeting standards of 'best practice', and submitting research findings to participants for confirmation of correct understanding, or respondent validation. As noted, the research was summarised and reports were distributed to all participants. Each person then had an opportunity to access their transcriptions and make alterations if necessary. None of the participants chose to alter their accounts. Whilst this does not guarantee a consensus between the participants and the research findings, it may indicate a degree of research credibility.

Dependability is considered to be the parallel to reliability in quantitative methodology. Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that an 'auditing' process, in which the research process is noted and assessed by peers, can provide a measure of dependability (Bryman, 2004). Although not in place for the activity of auditing, PhD supervision holds a similar role. And so although supervision was not directly

and purposefully *critical*, guidance was requested and received throughout the research process, which, it may be suggested, added to the dependability of the research data.

Transferability relates to the ability of the researcher to 'transfer' any theory to other groups or individuals within society. The aim of *this* research, however, was to access a framework that organises people's ideas and performances of love. This frame exists 'outside' specific individuals and so the degree to which any one individual has greater or lesser insight into the frame is questionable. It is recognised that there may not be one single 'frame' of love, rather there may be multiple frames organised along cultural or gendered lines, for example. Future research exploring such issues may prove helpful in this respect. Authenticity, as the 'extra' criterion, relates to the wider political impact of the research, and so, due to the scope of this study is of lesser significance. Notions of 'fairness', 'sophistication', 'mutual understanding' and 'empowerment' make up the criterion of authenticity, which are arguably worthy ethical ideals, but as indicators of quality of research could be deemed problematic; as Seale (2004) notes, they are heavily value-laden and have somewhat of a 'political' basis. This is not to suggest that they are not useful, but to limit a mark of quality only to research that has a direct impact on respondents may narrow what can be considered valuable. A more helpful concept may be that of 'use' as articulated by Rossman and Rallis (2003).

Rossman and Rallis (2003: 19) argue that 'the ultimate goal of qualitative research is learning, that is, the transformation of data in to information that can be used. *Use can be considered an ethical mandate*' (emphases in original). They also note that 'use' is not a unitary concept and propose four perspectives for

thinking through 'use': the instrumental, the emancipatory, the symbolic and the enlightenment. None are prioritised over the others and it is not expected that 'worthwhile' research will contain an element of each 'use'; instead the distinctions act as tools that can be used to identify the unique contribution that a particular piece of work makes. Instrumental use is associated with the application of knowledge to provide a solution to a specific problem. Research that is instrumental is often designed with this problem- solution nexus in mind. 'Use' within this type of research is relatively straightforward and easy to determine. My research was not designed with a concrete problem in mind and therefore it is unlikely that the research knowledge will be used instrumentally.

Emancipatory use occurs when the research process and outcome have a transformative effect on society, most often through the people participating in the research or consuming the knowledge generated by it. When users feel empowered by research they may have greater motivation to seek social change. There is an emphasis within emancipatory research that the participants involved with it are collaborate producers of knowledge with the *intention* of improving their own or others lives (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). Again, my research was not intended to be used in an emancipatory way. That being said, it could be argued that *all* research has the potential to positively impact peoples' lives, given the right circumstances. Given the significance that many theorists have given to love as the foundation of social solidarity, it could be argued that all theoretical work on love has the potential to positively, albeit indirectly, impact on a society and those that live within it.

The concepts of enlightenment and symbolic uses were relevant when evaluating and positioning this study. Enlightenment use is associated with

research that contributes to general knowledge, enhances understanding and offers 'heuristic insight' (Rossman and Rallis, 2003: 21). Detailed findings are not applied to specific problems as solutions, instead they become generalisations that come to shape the way people think. There is an emphasis on the gradual accumulation of knowledge that may challenge dominant ways of thinking and being in the world and research that contributes to this body of knowledge could be described as having an 'enlightening use'. My study was designed with the intention of contributing to a body of academic knowledge about love. The findings were used to interrogate existing literature on love and they provided a starting point for further inquiry. The research was also a unique contribution to 'Goffmanesque sociology' through the application of the concept of frame to understandings of emotional life.

'Research also offers a variety of *symbolic uses* ... Findings become knowledge by encouraging users to reconfigure old patterns and to see familiar pictures in new lights' (Rossman and Rallis, 2003: 22). Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that explanation and understanding are important human needs because people are ultimately sense-making beings. Research can address these needs by offering 'symbolic explanations' that groups of people can share. In generating explanations, clarifying complicated and ambiguous experiences, and making beliefs comprehensible, qualitative research can facilitate deeper understanding of complex phenomena. Symbolic uses of research, then, provide new ways of articulating phenomena which can lead to a crystallisation of beliefs or values and/or a reconceptualisation of the ideas that are shared in the public domain. It was this 'use' that was perhaps the most relevant to this research. The empirical aspect of the work was done to explore the common ideas about love that people

share. Many people that were spoken to about the research, including those who participated in the study, proposed that love is a wholly individual phenomenon – and yet the similarity between accounts is suggestive of love being less a unique experience and more a communally shared concept. A reconceptualisation of love as a shared concept has the potential to bring discussions of love from the individual private sphere, into the public domain. Doing so, then, could enable research on love to expand its sphere of influence, such that its use goes beyond the enlightening or symbolic and moves into the sphere of the instrumental and emancipatory. Chapter six explores some of the ways in which a ‘sociology of love’ may be used in these ways. The research does not claim to contain a ‘usefulness’ that pertains to all of these perspectives, but by contributing to a body of knowledge about love, this and further qualitative research on love can

‘serve the society studied, whether through immediate impact on a decision, through shaping people’s understandings of a complex topic, through interpreting and reinterpreting the meaning of events, or through actions that empower the participants’.

– Rossman and Rallis, 2003: 24.

External criteria of quality are helpful to both the researcher and to those engaging with the research because they ensure that the research presents a valuable contribution to the discipline and to the social world. Given the explorative nature of the study it was also felt that there was a space for reflexive practice within this project. A frame analysis of love had not been done and this meant that much of the methodological choices were ‘trials’ for a good fit between the substantive topic – love, the theoretical framework – frame, and various methods of data generation

available to access participants accounts. A reflexive analysis of the fieldwork process from conception to completion was therefore undertaken.

Reflexively evaluating the research

I wanted to incorporate an element of observation within my work so that I could explore both what people say about what they do and what they actually do. The research was heavily influenced by Goffman's concept of frame and so observation seemed a relevant avenue to explore, given that much of Goffman's own work is ethnographic in nature and focused predominantly on naturally-occurring speech or through direct observation of interactions. Nonetheless, whilst direct observation of social situations – analysing what 'action' occurs and when – would have been beneficial, it was felt that 'love' would have been difficult to observe in public spaces, not least because doing so would have drawn on my own understandings of love. Accessing *private* spaces within which to observe love would, however, have been both practically difficult and ethically problematic as I wanted to avoid 'undue obtrusion' (Webster *et al*, 2014: 87). Direct observation was therefore considered to be impractical for this exploratory research project.

In order to try and include some level of observation alongside discursive accounts of love, dyadic interviews, with two people in some form of love relationship, were considered. It was felt that these types of interview could allow for the observation of expressions of love and/or the spontaneous raising of issues. Nonetheless it was believed that there would have been ethical implications and as such dyadic interviews were considered potentially problematic. Such discussions may have had negative, and potentially lasting, implications on participants' relationships with one another. Similarly, should any issues have arisen in which one or both parties became angry or upset, for example, there was a concern that a

potential to use the interview in a therapeutic way could have arisen. Although I have received some formal counselling training, it was felt that a research interview was not the appropriate forum for resolving such issues, and it would also have jeopardised my position as a researcher. Therefore, because of the challenges associated with minimising harm to participants, and with maintaining my role as a researcher, dyadic interviews were abandoned as a viable research method.

Using examples was one way in which I tried to include an element of observation but overcome the issue of researcher generated images or events. Prior to the interviews I asked participants to identify images, texts and/or music that they felt demonstrated or embodied love. I was then able to use these examples within the interview to begin talking about love, through questioning the participants on what they have identified and why. Because I had identified a need to move away from discussions of individual feelings and experiences I replaced the request for participant-chosen examples of love and instead introduced a short vignette at the beginning. 'A vignette is a verbal illustration' (Stake, 2010: 172) that in this case was used to orientate the discussions away from an individual's own feeling and towards the behaviours of others. Vignettes are useful triggers within research as they often initiate conversation and 'provoke the telling of stories' (Adamson *et al*, 2004: 143).

At the start of the focus group discussions I proposed a situation in which the participants had to explain how to 'do' love to an 'alien' that had no prior knowledge of what love is or how it is performed. Participants found the vignette amusing and this helped put them at ease and this was beneficial. They also, however, referred to 'the alien' throughout the discussions and appeared to find it

a helpful way of focusing on behaviour rather than feelings. Were I to repeat the research I would utilise vignettes more as they seemed a fruitful way to initiate conversation. They provided a neutral example to draw upon, rather than exploring individual experience in depth. Their use also avoided any imposition of my own social/cultural understandings of love.

With further reflection on methods, I feel that my initial analysis of the usefulness (or lack of) of individual interviews was mistaken; they provided a good source of data for textual analysis. As standalone methods I think that interviews, focus groups or qualitative questionnaires could adequately capture relevant data required for a frame analysis. I also believe that these methods could work well in combination; I think that qualitative questionnaires, completed as part of an individual interview could be especially fruitful. Combining questionnaires with qualitative interviews has been referred to as holding 'questerviews' (Adamson *et al*, 2004). The researchers using them suggest that the 'inclusion of standardised survey questions in qualitative interviews can provide an easy and fruitful method to explore research issues and provide triggers to difficult or contested topics' (Adamson *et al*, 2004: 139). Although 'questerviews' were initially done with quantitative questionnaires, I believe that the qualitative questions asked in the questionnaire I distributed as part of this research could be helpful in orientating individuals to the type of data necessary for a frame analysis. It would also be a useful guiding and reference tool throughout the interview process. Adamson *et al* (2004: 143) suggest that one of the main benefits of using questionnaires alongside interviews is that 'the completion of the questionnaires acted as an ice-breaker'.

Using questionnaires with focus group research could also be a helpful and interesting combination. Within this research I requested that individuals complete the questionnaire prior to group discussions. This was because I wanted the questionnaire to orientate people's thinking so that they could focus their contributions on providing the type of data I wanted – examples of behaviours of love. Allowing individuals to complete the questionnaires *after* the discussions would be interesting, because it would allow the researcher to explore the extent to which the social (that is shared) nature of knowledge, which is inherent within focus group discussions, informs individual accounts of love. Comparing the data from these two modes of delivery would be interesting.

Another way to access the behaviours of love may be to conduct research with individuals who have to 'perform' love, in the absence of loving feelings. This population could include actors, directors and writers who portray love as part of the cultural artefacts they create and may be a helpful avenue for future exploration of this topic.

Conclusions

Despite *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1974) lacking a developed set of methods (Gamson, 1975) this research has utilised Goffman's work as a conceptual framework for understanding social life, understanding love and in developing a research design that was in keeping with his social-anthropological approach. The research proposed a conceptualisation of love as a structured activity system – a love frame – and this chapter has introduced and reviewed those research methods used to access this system in this project, and pointed to future avenues

for follow on studies. This was a unique contribution to the discipline as no other frame analyses of love had been done. Having completed a 'frame analysis' of love I now understand why this was the case! The use of any particular method was not indicated within Goffman's work, neither was it obviously apparent by looking at the substantive topic. Nonetheless, according to Manning (1980: 256) '[frames] are real because we both display [them] for each other and recognise them when others produce them for us'. In order to understand a particular frame then, it was proposed that we need to understand behavioural displays. Utilising an abductive research strategy allowed social actors' accounts of activity to form the basis of theoretical articulation. Difficulties in accessing accounts of behaviour, and not feelings, were encountered and so the use of different qualitative research methods evolved throughout the fieldwork process. Qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and qualitative questionnaires were explored as viable methods of frame analysis. Rich textual data was generated by these methods; each appeared capable of accessing the 'frame'. The research, then, has generated data that has allowed the sketching of a love frame that can be interrogated by further and future work.

Chapter Five: Research Findings

'We all know what love is – until we try to say it loud and clear'

– Zygmunt Bauman, 2001: 163

Despite many participants articulating that love was hard to describe because it is so intangible and uniquely personal, there was a striking amount of similarity between the responses of participants within this research. These similarities were present regardless of whether participants were interviewed, took part in a focus group discussion or completed a qualitative questionnaire. This confirmed that love is not merely an individual, subjective feeling but one that contains a set of meanings that are intersubjectively shared between people. This confirmation meant that a frame analysis of love was possible because it indicated that there *are* common ways of loving that may be apprehended. This was the first significant finding of the research.

In line with the research questions posed on page 151 the questioning within all the methods of data generation was designed to explore two separate but related issues: 'doing' love and 'knowing' love. 'Doing love' involved exploring the ways in which people expressed their own feelings of love to other people. 'Knowing' love involved exploring the ways in which people understood that their own feelings were 'love', the actions that informed their understandings that other people loved them and also what they 'recognised' to be love between others. The research accounts all communicated that there are common ways to do and know love. Although 'knowing' love was predominantly about the recognition and classification of one's own feelings it was nonetheless related to action, or perhaps

more importantly willingness or *intention* of action. Awareness of intentional and motivated loving behaviour was an important finding because it was consistent with my proposal that love is part of a social primary framework as described in chapter three.

There was also a sense in which 'knowing' love and 'doing' love, though analytically separate, were interdependent – such that an individual's way of 'knowing' that their own feelings were love affected their demonstration of those feelings; they then applied the same 'schema' in order to understand and classify the feelings of others, based on their (the other's) behaviour. The individual's use of a schema or framework in understanding their own *and* other's feelings/behaviours supports the proposal that something such as a 'love frame' exists. Whilst the framework *could* be unique to the individual, the similarity of the accounts by different participants suggests, however, that such a framework inheres not within the individual, but is instead shared by members of a society. Further research could explore this claim further. Nonetheless it is encouraging, theoretically, to identify a possible way of exploring love (and emotions more generally) that takes into account the social aspects of love – a shared schema or framework – without abandoning individual feeling and action – for it is always individuals who interpret, use and work with a frame.

Discussions of intentions, expectations and desires were used to explain differences between love and non-love, and also between different 'types' of love. The intention behind action, then, was a key indicator of the love frame. This was especially interesting given that many of the actions or expressions of love that people described were not uniquely 'loving' behaviours, but may be performed for different reasons ('care', for example, can be given lovingly and/or for monetary

exchange. It might seem difficult, then, to distinguish between actions done out of love and actions done as a means of achieving another end. Nonetheless, participants were able to articulate and often identify differences with regards to 'intention' (or underlying feeling) based on a number of important, but often subtle, expressive gestures or through the accumulation of non-gesturative expressions (that is non-performative expressions of love). These will be discussed in detail within this chapter.

Another commonality between the accounts received from participants regarded different 'types' of love. All the participants across the range of research methods suggested that there are different types of love and that these types are expressed differently to one another. These types of love are as follows: partnership/romantic love; love from a parent towards their child; love from a child towards their parent; 'family love' – often used to refer to extended family; love between siblings; platonic love between friends (friendship); love for pets; and love for things, concepts and activities. What was most interesting was the extent to which the different types of love (and their related 'expressions') were described in very similar ways to one another, such that the differences that characterised different types of love were not so much 'qualitative' but 'quantitative'. People described the feelings and expressions of love between family members, for example, in the same way they described feelings and expressions of platonic love between friends.

“These things [people do to demonstrate love] don't just apply to family, they apply to all love”. (Nick, Focus group participant).

The key difference seemed to be about the *intensity* of feeling and the amount of *focused attention* that the loved person received. Similarly, a number of people

commented that love is something that is 'unique' to the person – one participant, for example, stated that

“There are as many different types of love as there are different people – I believe love is a personal experience” (Nicola, QQ).

Yet, her overall account indicated that her own feelings of love, and the way she expresses those feelings, within her own life are similar regardless of who the loved person is – what was different for her was the intensity of the feeling and the extent to which she expressed those feelings. Her account was also very similar to accounts given by the majority of respondents – undermining ideas about the uniqueness of love and strengthening my argument that ideas about love are shared. Nonetheless, despite a lack of qualitative difference between different types of love, the distinctions between them seemed to be important to participants.

This chapter begins with an overview of the 'examples' of love that participants identified prior to their individual interviews; there are five in total. These examples were the starting point of the interviews and were useful ways to initiate a conversation about what love 'looks' like. I then present the main findings of the research through a description of the seven analytical concepts identified, these are: Togetherness, Closeness, Positive Communication, Knowledge, Care, Prioritising the Other, and Intensity of Feeling Focused Attention. The descriptions include: the characteristics of the concept; an explanation of the ways in which the concept varied and was differentially (un)important dependent on the 'type' of love being discussed; and also explore the extent to which the concept was helpful as a way of 'knowing' love and/or 'doing' love. Within these descriptions I use extracts of texts from the interviews, the focus group discussions and from the

qualitative questionnaires. The source of the data is noted after the participants name and is indicated as follows: individual interview (I/V); focus group discussion (F/G); and qualitative questionnaire (QQ). The extracts have been chosen because they most clearly articulate the analytical concept being described; the majority of the extracts come from the interviews, however, because answers to questions were more developed within the individual interviews than in the other two methods. Nonetheless, the ideas expressed by the analytical categories were present in all the data that was collected, across each of the methods utilised. An overview of the findings as a whole, concludes the chapter by providing and translating the categories into a description of the 'love frame'. This overview is then developed further in subsequent chapters.

Cultural Examples of Love

Siân

Siân brought an example from a television show that was popular in the first decade of the twenty-first century called *Sex and the City*. The scene she described was not one between intimate partners but between a woman (one of the major characters called Miranda) and her elderly mother-in-law. Siân described it as follows:

“Miranda had this really fraught relationship with her mother-in-law and her mother-in-law got the onset of dementia and she’s becoming very frail and she’s come to live with them. It’s a very difficult situation and one day she goes missing and Miranda goes out in a panic and finds her in the street and brings her home and cleans her up and baths her and ... the housekeeper says to her afterwards ‘what you did today, that’s what love is’”.

When explaining what about this scene expressed love, Siân suggested that it was because it demonstrated the ways in which love “motivates you to do things that

you wouldn't normally do and it motivates you to do them willingly". Love, then, contains a power to do things for others that a person may not feel motivated to do; not for one's own sake, but for the sake of the beloved. This way of thinking about love was present in other descriptions of love and it is an idea articulated within the analytical category of 'Prioritising the other'.

Ceit

"I've brought some lyrics to a song that whenever I hear it, and what I was going to say was that for me there are different sorts of love, but when you talk about romantic love with a partner there's a couple of lines that make me think that's what it means to me. It's 'A Case of You' [by Joni Mitchell] and it says 'I could drink a case of you and I'd still be on my feet'. The idea that you can be totally consumed by it".

This song reminded Ceit of romantic love because it communicates a desire for the other person that is all consuming and overwhelming. She suggested in her explanation of why she had chosen this example, that love, unlike other emotions, makes you want to "be everything to somebody and for somebody to be everything to you". In love, she claimed, there is never going to be 'too much' of the other person. This was an idea that came through in other accounts and is represented in the concept of 'Togetherness'.

Vanessa

Vanessa's example of 'love' was from the Bible. She suggested that God's love for the world through the death of His Son, Jesus, on the cross was representative of a 'spiritual love' that is a "virtue, something from above". Vanessa quoted John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" as a way of communicating the sacrificial element of love. She described the cross of Jesus as a "signpost" to loving behaviour: "you are supposed to pick up your cross and follow me [Jesus] and

you're supposed to be prepared to do things that are very difficult" – not for one's own sake, but for the other's. Vanessa's description echoed Siân's ideas when she said that love is about being "prepared to do something against my own interests because of something greater than me" – love involves prioritising the other.

Hannah

'An unsatisfied woman requires luxury, but a woman who is in love will lie on a board'

Hannah began her interview by telling me that she had looked for some quotes about love and having thought about them, had talked her ideas through with her partner. She concluded that they have different views on love and she believed this came from her formative experiences of love growing up. Interestingly, however, her partner also took part in the research and their accounts of love were very similar. She mentioned this quote above as a way of describing the ways in which love binds individuals together and does so 'beyond' reason. Like Siân and Vanessa, Hannah suggested that love motivates you to accept things you would not accept elsewhere – like lying on a board – because when you love someone other considerations become less important. In this way love exists as a separate sphere from the rest of the 'rational' world. Hannah claimed that this was especially true for romantic love: "there is something about love that everything else falls away, the rational decision-making you'd make about researching a new washing machine you don't go through the logical processes is much, it just sort of snaps". Love, then, was described as compelling and something which forces one to reconsider all aspects of one's life. This shared some similarities with other accounts about the encompassing nature of love.

Laura

Laura was the only participant to bring an image to her interview. Her example was from an advert by telecommunications company 'Orange'. The advert shows a small wind-up plastic figurine (see image 1.0 below) that walks through a town. The caption for the advert is 'togetherness, keep it going'. Laura said that this advert reminded her of love because the figure represents two separate people who, through love, have become one unit. Love's transformative power in this regard was echoed by a number of participants and it is most clearly articulated within the analytical categories of 'togetherness' and 'closeness'.



Image 1.0

These examples provided a helpful starting point for discussion within the interviews. They were included in the overall analysis and it was interesting that the examples corresponded to the descriptions of love that were contained within all the research accounts.

Main Analytical Categories/Concepts²⁰***Togetherness***

"What do I do to show love? All the usual things – the sharing, the intimacy, the wanting to be together, wanting to share time together" (Tom, I/V)

²⁰ Key to abbreviations: I/V = interview; F/G = focus group; QQ = qualitative questionnaire.

The concept of 'togetherness' was an important one for all participants and for all types of love, though the expectation of 'togetherness' *was* variable – more will be said about this later. The majority, if not all, of my participants suggested that physically 'being together' was an important part of 'doing' love – Tom described it as the 'machinery' that keeps a relationship working. This might mean engaging in shared activities (certainly the case for friendship) – a physical togetherness - but with partnership love it was often referred to an interconnectedness of lives, a sort of 'emotional togetherness'. This involved more than simply 'spending a lot of time with each other' (though this was important too), and was instead experienced as an 'intertwining' – both of two people sharing the practicalities of daily living and also the entanglement of their 'selves'.

“[In love there are] the practicalities of two people living together and you mesh together and it just works” (Tom, I/V).

“It's the way you look at someone, it's the way you talk to them, it's the jokes you share, the way you plan what's going to happen for the day, it's the way you share what someone else is going to do or what you're going to do, what you're annoyed about, what you're pleased about, what you hope for, what you fear for, what you've read about what the newspaper said, what you're having for supper and why, whether there's anything good on TV. It's all that moment by moment stuff that says 'I'm really interested in you, in what you think'”. (Vanessa, I/V).

A number of participants described the sense of togetherness experienced with love as 'all-encompassing' and 'all-consuming': “[Partnership love is] about who you want to share your whole world with.” (Tom, I/V). As noted above, Laura identified a figurine used in an advert, as a way of explaining what she felt constituted (partnership) love (see image 1.0 above). When asked what it is about this advert/this figure that communicates 'love' she suggested, “I think it's because they're stuck together, made together. Two people but together” (Laura, I/V). Emotional togetherness, then, seemed to describe a situation in which two people

in love become so emotionally connected that they operate almost as one unit. This emotional togetherness was recognised interactionally through familiarity of gesture and speech and through a sense of being ‘in sync’ with one another i.e. “finishing each other’s sentences” (Nicola, QQ) and shared looks.

Feelings of trust and commitment *between people* were associated with non-interactional cues of emotional togetherness. This included a basic expectation of trustworthiness of the beloved. Katie (F/G) said, for example, that with people you love “you don’t doubt things that they tell you, you just naturally believe them”. Overwhelmingly, however, feelings of trust were experienced as an expectation that being in a loving relationship, particularly within partnerships and families, enables someone to ‘be themselves’ without negative consequences.

“I think when you’re with someone you love that defence rolls back. You become more you. Because you know you can be. They won’t judge you, won’t think about you differently – it’s unconditional.” (Tom, I/V)

“I just know whatever I did they’d always still love me”. (Laura, I/V)

“[Loving means] to let you be you. Let you be and not try and make you into something else”. (Ceit, I/V).

“[In love relationships you need] room to develop, room to be who you are”. (Carol, F/G).

This expectation of being accepted as you are was a part of being loved and also of doing love: “Another way I show him I love him is that I accept him for who he is.” (Natalie, QQ). A perceived lack of acceptance of self was, conversely, described as a barrier or damaging to love. When asked about an occasion in which she had strong feelings for someone but those feelings were not love, one interviewee described an experience when she had loved someone in the past but in which the relationship had changed and the love was no longer present. When asked why she had stopped loving them she explained:

“I don’t think about her in that way anymore ... because she used to make me feel that there was something wrong with me” (Ceit, I/V).

Within Ceit’s relationship love was undermined because the feelings of being accepted and loved as she was, ceased to exist. Without this trust she could not ‘be herself’ and she did not feel loved by her friend; consequently she no longer continued to love her as she had done previously. Being able to ‘be oneself’, then, was communicated as a vital part of being able to ‘be together’.

There was also a sense in which emotional togetherness was constituted as ‘being on the same side’. Some called it commitment, others suggested ‘loyalty’ was an appropriate term.

“I’m not sure it’s the right word, but commitment. Sticking together”. (Mary, F/G).

Other participants didn’t provide a label but articulated the same kind of idea. To most participants who articulated it as an idea this meant being supported by the other in and throughout difficult situations.

“[To show love people need] to be there for the bad times as well”. (Hannah, I/V).

“[Love is shown in] the way people behave I suppose. Particularly the last couple of years of being ill and I’ve been in hospital. The effort that people will go to on my behalf. Friends who’ve been working all day come to visit me in hospital. And you might think, if you were a real cynic, that well it’s expected, but not the amount that they came. That was much more than was ever expected. And my mum coming every single day. It’s not just what people say, it’s their actions that these people have put you, they do things that make you feel important in their life. And don’t do it begrudgingly but do it because they want to”. (Ceit, I/V).

Some participants, such as Hannah and Ceit had experienced this first hand, others merely noted it as an important aspect of demonstrating love through caring for the other: “Being there for each other when there’s [difficult] situations is a loving thing”. (Florence, F/G).

As important as emotional togetherness was, people spoke about how it was often generated and/or maintained via physical togetherness. All participants considered spending time together to be an important part of loving relationships. This was primarily as a demonstration of loving feelings. That being said, one participant also suggested that spending time together may have a causative effect on feelings, especially within families:

“Loving somebody happens by accident – when you’re doing things with somebody or for somebody or you’re there for them”. (Susan, F/G).

Nonetheless the majority of participants of the interviews, focus groups and qualitative questionnaires mentioned something about spending time together as being a way to demonstrate love to others. The expectation of how much time together was, however, variable dependent upon the type of relationship. There was an acknowledgement that one’s time had to be shared amongst a number of significant other, loved people. The greatest expectation regarding time spent together was between intimate partners.

“Like when you’re in a relationship you’ve just got one other person, but you’ve got loads of friends as well so you focus all the aspects we said before – like loyalty, support, so it’s stronger” (James, F/G).

Importantly, this time spent together was done so because both parties desired it. The desire and willingness to spend a lot of time in the company of one other person was often used as a way of understanding one’s own feelings towards that other – the desire to spend increased amounts of time in co-presence with someone often indicated to the individual that their feelings for the other had moved beyond liking into loving.

“The main difference [between liking and loving] is that with [my partner] I want to be with her all the time” (Tom, I/V).

Motivated, intentional time together, then, was a crucial way of ‘knowing’ love, especially in comparison to other emotions.

Spending time together was articulated both as a desire or ‘need’ to be with them, but also a desire to ‘express’ love *to* them. During his interview, for example, Tom suggested that his love for his partner and his daughter and the love for his extended family was different. When asked how it was different he suggested that with his immediate family “I have a need for them to be around ... But I also have a need to express [love] to them which you can’t do unless you see them regularly”. Tom understood his own feelings about the people in his life and their significance to him, through his desire/need to be with them – as an end in itself *and* in terms of his own sense of wanting to express his feelings to them. Both were indicators of intensity of feeling. Spending time with friends and family *were* considered important, but less so. With regards to friendship there was a sense in which time spent together was done so for pleasure, whereas a number of participants reported some sense of duty or expectation regarding spending time with one’s family.

“There’s a lot of duty towards your family ... there’s just an expectation that you’ll spend a certain amount of time together” (Ceit, I/V).

“I would distinguish love that’s almost got obligation involved because it’s family you’re born into, from love with people who you’ve chosen” (Siân, I/V).

“The only [difference] I can think [of between family love and other types of love] is that it’s not optional” (Nick, F/G).

Obligation, as a motivator for both loving feeling and loving behaviour, was described, then, as one way to differentiate between types of love, especially between families and relationships of choice. This differentiation has an impact on

the expectations of time spent together, though this tended to minimise or maximise the need to spend time together, not remove the need entirely.

There was, however, a type of love that seemed to be exempt from physical togetherness and this was love between siblings. A number of people communicated that they spent very little time with their siblings and yet they still felt that love existed between the two (or more) of them. When questioned further, participants expressed that what gave them a sense of love within their relationship was a memory of togetherness in the past. What seemed to be important within sibling relationships, and also between friends who saw very little of each other, was shared experiences in the past.

“You’ve got a shared history haven’t you? That’s part of it, there’s no-one else that knows how I grew up except him cause my mum doesn’t cause she was the parent” (Ceit, I/V).

“It’s someone that you’ve grown up with”. (Natalie, QQ)

One participant who discovered that she had siblings as an adult and thus did not have a shared history with them, articulated that the lack of shared physical togetherness (alongside a lack of knowledge about each other) undermined any sense of ‘sibling love’ she may have felt, or may feel in the future – she was, at this time, ambivalent about her relationship with them.

“There is an assumption that we love each other or that we will love each other because we are family and that’s what families do... [there’s an expectation] that we need to be phoning each other and visiting each other and ‘I want my children to know their aunty and I love you, you’re my sister’, and it’s not real. If we had grown up together and we had had all the battles that you have and all the experiences you have and all that shared history then I guess you’d have had to have worked out a relationship that may or may not have love at its foundation. But to suddenly have that imposed on you simply because you have a biological tie feels extremely strange” (Vanessa, I/V).

This same sentiment – that a lack of physical togetherness had been damaging to relationships – was echoed elsewhere by participants. Two participants in particular noted that they were unsure about their feelings towards their biological fathers. Neither respondent wanted their father's to experience harm but neither did they feel that they loved him.

“I didn't know whether to put [that I love] my dad because I feel so much animosity towards him for not being around” (Ceit, I/V).

The damage done by 'not being around' communicates the need to 'be around' as a way of 'doing love' and creating and maintaining a loving relationship.

'Togetherness', then, is characterised by both a desire to be and an experience of being in physical co-presence with someone – albeit sometimes this togetherness occurred in the past, but more often it formed part of present relationships. Indeed, the ceasing of a desire or experience of physical togetherness indicated or expressed the end of an intimate partner relationship. Alongside spending time with one another, people expressed togetherness as a form of emotional connectedness. This involved a (mutual) willingness to trust the other – to surrender one's 'authentic' self to the other and to commit to the relationship even when it was challenging to do so. Ideas about Togetherness did not exist in isolation, however, and they were very much connected to the ideas contained within the categories of 'Closeness' and 'Knowledge'.

Closeness

The concept of 'Closeness' describes both a physical and a non-physical sense of proximity to the loved person. Close physical proximity involved sharing (personal) space with another and doing so willingly or with a desire to do so. Connected to this was physical touch and affection. The type of physical touch

relevant to love involved hugging, kissing and hand-holding. These types of actions were expressed as being very important as a way of 'doing' love, as a way of expressing to the other that they were loved. These participants responded in the following ways when asked what they do to demonstrate love to others:

"Being close, being in someone's personal space" (Becky, F/G).

"So I'll cuddle him a lot, I'll kiss him, I'll rub his head, I'll be affectionate, I'm very demonstrative, not so much in public we'll link arms or hold hands but we're not all over each other snogging in the street kind of people but we are affectionate and I'll show affection" (Hannah, I/V).

But because physical proximity and affectionate touch were ways of doing love, they were also communicated as important ways of 'knowing' love. When being performed, closeness and affection were described as enacting loving feelings; when being 'received' from others, they were seen as indicators of love.

Hannah, for example, liked affectionate touch because it acted as a regular reminder that her partner loved her. In her experience, the amount of touch was directly proportionate to the amount of loving feeling the other person was experiencing.

"Because somebody's thinking about me in an affectionate way and it's demonstrative. ... might tell me that they love me and 10 minutes later I might think that they don't love me because they haven't said it again ... so something like spontaneous affection is incredibly important, cause it's suddenly a reassurance, a positive stroke that 'wow yeah he's thinking about me'. So affection, holding hands, spontaneous affection, massage."

Similarly, another participant explained that physical touch was so important between her and her husband that if the amount of touch were to diminish she would see this as being problematic.

"We are tactile so this is the way we express ourselves generally – if the touching stopped I would wonder what's wrong" (Carrie, QQ).

Participants expressed a strong connection between feelings of emotional 'closeness' and actions of physical closeness and for this reason physical demonstration of love was vital in doing and being loved.

That being said, participants communicated that different types of relationships required different amounts and types of closeness, especially with regards to regular, close proximity to the other. Friendships, which a number of respondents said were a type of love relationship, were less likely to require regular, close proximity in order to maintain the relationship. Moreover, although there was an awareness of love (as opposed to liking) within the friendship, the degree to which there was a desire for close proximity was used as an indicator of the intensity of feeling towards the other and so acted as something of an indicator of love.

"I don't think that you need to be constantly calling on people to be friends – though I've certainly come across friends who think you do, that part of love is being in proximity, close proximity with each other and popping in each other's lives all the time. I've never thought that" (Vanessa, I/V).

"Lots of my friends – I'd say I love them. But it's more of a like-love than a love-love ... I probably don't need to see them all the time and actually I'm glad when they go home! We're quite 'touchy-feely' with our friends – we hug them. But it's more of a like-love you. Expressed it then and that's it. Whereas with love-love you want to express it regularly" (Tom, I/V).

Different types of relationship, then, were described as requiring different amounts of closeness, to be appropriately expressed according to relationship type. 'Appropriate expression' of closeness – through physical affection such as hugging, kissing, hand-holding – more often related to the amount and regularity of the closeness rather than to the specific behaviours used in its expression.

Participants suggested that, depending on the context, it was appropriate to hug, kiss and hold hands with friends, for example. There was one exception: the sexual aspect of intimate partnership love was an issue that arose in interviews and focus groups as an example of a relationship type that involved a very specific type of closeness, one reserved only for this sphere. One focus group, which raised this issue spontaneously, believed that intimate and sexual touch was the critical difference between partnership love and other types of love. This sentiment was echoed by other groups and within interviews.

“Sexual passion is a part of a couples love relationship ... every description we’ve given of love whether it be for children or sweethearts, describes more or less the same – there’s just something passion-wise that’s different” (Florence, F/G).

“I suppose I would distinguish between love that involves sexual feelings from love that doesn’t” (Siân, I/V).

“I think [different types of love] are slightly different but there’s a lot of the same elements ... the same love feelings and without the lust. I haven’t mentioned lust but that is very much part of being in love with a partner for me” (Hannah, I/V).

There appeared to be a consensus amongst participants that sexual closeness was reserved for intimate partnerships, but that all other types of physical affection were appropriate as long as they were done within the bounds of that particular relationship type.

More investigation is needed to delineate the boundaries of relationship types in relation to degrees of physical closeness because there was no direct questioning to explore this issue within this research. Participants did indicate, however, that there were different expectations regarding the amount and regularity of physical closeness and that there were consequences when this closeness was not received. One such consequence articulated by respondents was

a feeling of loss – or an expectation of a feeling of loss – when or if the regularity of proximity decreased.

“You are part of my day-to-day life and I’d physically miss you ... they leave a hole” (Vanessa, I/V).

“[Love is] partly that fear of loss, that I would be devastated if I didn’t have them anymore, there’s a need to have those people, I feel some ways dependent on them” (Siân, I/V).

Feelings of loss were especially potent when expectations about the regularity of proximity and feelings were not met. There were two reasons proposed for this. Firstly, when there were expectations about what type of relationship contains which type of love disappointment ensued when this was not case. Hannah explained, for example, that within a very close familial relationship there was only irregular contact and little emotional closeness.

“I do love her, I do have feelings of warmth to her but they’re sporadic and not consistent ... because she keeps in touch with me so erratically ... that doesn’t make me feel very good about myself. It’s very hard to have a relationship” (Hannah, I/V).

Loving the other person was difficult for her because the relationship was one in which closeness and regular contact was expected. This led to her own feelings of loving the other person being undermined. Part of this was because she felt unloved by the other and part of this was a recognition that a close relationship was difficult to maintain under circumstances in which there is little contact and therefore little closeness – physically and emotionally.

Secondly, once a relationship was *established* as containing a certain ‘type’ of love, such that the amount of closeness in the relationship was an indicator of the status of that relationship for both parties, when the amount of closeness changed suddenly it signified a change in the classification of that relationship for

one person, which then impacted on the other. Tom explained in his interview that during his marriage to his first wife he had come to expect a certain level of closeness that was manifested in specific ways – in this case Tom’s wife had always gone with him when he worked as a DJ. When she stopped doing this Tom became aware that his wife’s desire to be close to him had diminished and that, ultimately, she had begun the process of reclassifying the relationship. Shortly after this change their marriage ended permanently. The consequences of differences between expectations of closeness and actually being close to someone can be great: feelings of love can be undermined and such difference can signal a change in relationship, whether intended or not.

Despite being forwarded as an important aspect of doing love, physical affection was not communicated as *always* being necessary for someone to feel loved. Three participants suggested that their parents had not been physically affectionate towards them, as children or as adults, but that they had still felt loved by them. Nonetheless, each of the participants explained that not being shown affection by their parent(s) had had consequences. Ceit suggested, for example, that she had always felt loved by her mum despite there being a lack of physical affection between them. She suggested, however, that the lack of ‘hugging’ from her mum had impacted on her own expectations and practices of hugging others.

“I hug people more now than I used to do but I had to learn how to do it because my mum never ever hugged us and it was something people told me off about over the years” (Ceit, I/V).

This resulted in Ceit feeling that she was *not* very physically demonstrative, but feeling that she *should* be. This suggested that the physical demonstration of love through affectionate touch can be recognised as important, even when an individual finds it difficult to engage in such behaviour. It also indicated that

although a general 'love frame' organises our experiences of love, it is differentially drawn upon and used according to the character of the individual; different ways of drawing on the love frame do not, necessarily, reduce the effectiveness of communicating love to others.

Nonetheless, the frame can, and perhaps should, be learnt about and used more over time. In her interview Ceit commented, "I'm better than I used to be" at demonstrating love through physical touch. This suggested that she was able to learn how to use this aspect of the frame even though this particular expression of love did not come 'naturally' to her. Importantly, the fact that Ceit was 'told off' by others indicated that there was a high degree of *expectation* of physical touch as an expression of love within those relationships. This expectation was a common feature of the research accounts, further strengthening the view that physical touch and affection are an important part of the love frame. Moreover, that Ceit felt it necessary to 'improve' upon her use of the frame over time in this regard, demonstrated that the frame has greater controlling effect on individual behaviour, than individual behaviour has on the frame. This suggested that physical affection is an important part of doing love, despite the fact that some relationships required less of this type of behaviour.

Not everyone agreed, however, that physical affection, especially from parents towards their children, was an 'optional' part of love. Doreen believed that formative experiences of love (that are outside of the love frame) can significantly and negatively impact on one's ability to know and do love.

"Well I think in bringing up children you've got to [physically] demonstrate to them that that they're loved. There are so many families today that have

never known love. For instance Ronald's*²¹ family, they don't know love, none of them and I've met one or two of them and they're all the same, they're all hard" (Doreen, I/V).

She continued to explain that her husband, who she felt had problems with doing and being loved, had never learnt *how* to love because he had not experienced loving behaviour and physical affection from his parents. Within the research, then, physical affection, especially between parents and children, was articulated as both necessary and unnecessary to doing love and feeling loved.

When taken as whole, however, all the accounts of love suggested that doing love consists of a multitude of behaviours and that love can still be demonstrated effectively even if not all aspects of the love frame are drawn upon. What Doreen suggested was that her husband's parents had not cared well for him, nor had they communicated positively to him; this lack of care and positive communication, combined with a lack of physical affection, led, in her opinion, to her husband (and his siblings) struggling with knowing how to demonstrate feelings of love to other people. This suggested that a frame is a multidimensional phenomenon. Like a jigsaw, when one piece is missing the picture can still be discerned, but when many pieces are missing it may no longer be possible to successfully recognise what one is looking at. Closeness, especially physical closeness and affection, seemed to be an important part of the love frame but not one that was necessary in all love relationships, as long as other valid ways of doing love were present.

Positive Communication

"Using the word love is a display of love". (Nick, F/G).

²¹ Name changed for anonymity.

The concept of positive communication included verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbalising feelings was for many respondents extremely important in 'doing' love but also as a way of knowing whether they were loved. The most common way of verbalising love was through saying "I love you". When Hannah was asked how she demonstrated love to people, her response was "I touch them a lot; I tell them I love them".

Similarly when asked how they knew that somebody loved them, a number of people commented 'because they tell me!'. Becky suggested that it may be crucially important to tell someone 'I love you' because without verbalisation, demonstrations of love may not be enough.

"Sometimes you could display all the actions but never say it and that person could feel 'they don't love me because they've never said it'" (Becky, F/G).

Nick argued, however, that the reverse could also be true:

"Or someone could say it all the time and never show it and that would have the same effect" (Nick, F/G).

Nonetheless Hannah told me that the only way she knew for *certain* about whether her friends loved her was if they told her so:

"With my friends I'm sure there are more that love me than I'm writing on this list, but these are the people that would tell me they love me in communication so that's why I know for sure"(Hannah, I/V).

Nonetheless, despite the importance of saying 'I love you' within love relationships, positive communication was not solely related to the verbalising of emotions.

'Respectful' communication was, for many, seen as an indicator of love. This involved polite and kind speech delivered in a pleasant tone. The absence of respectful communication was also an indicator of 'not-love'. The qualitative questionnaire asked respondents to explain what would indicate to them that two people did *not* love each other; aggressive behaviour and negative communication such as shouting or unkind words were seen as being indicative of a poor, non-loving relationship (regardless of relationship type). More subtle cues were also indicative of a lack of love and these related to the absence of loving behaviours, rather than the presence of specifically non-loving behaviours. Rosie, for example, when asked what indicates that people do not love one another, suggested 'No familiarity at all' (Rosie, QQ). Respectful speech and familiarity of speech, on the other hand, were seen as expressions of love – both to particular loved others within interaction, and also as a way of 'recognising' love in the behaviour of others.

Positive communication also involved non-verbal cues such as eye-contact and smiling, especially if these were prolonged and shared.

"Showing love to children involves smiling, eye-contact, listening" (Becky, F/G).

Again, these behaviours indicated to people that (observed) relationships were loving, as well as being used to 'do' love and to recognise love from others.

Knowledge

"Wanting to know the other... it's a part of love" (Vanessa, I/V).

Knowledge was a core concept in both doing love and knowing love because it was described as a pre-requisite for love's existence. A number of people commented that knowing someone well was foundational to their feelings about them.

"I don't love my biological father ... I suppose it's because I don't really know him" (Laura, I/V).

Others used the concept of knowledge to explain one of the differences between 'liking' and 'loving'. Whilst 'liking' appeared to be an almost universal but superficial feeling of regard for the other, knowledge of the other was associated with the deepening of this feeling into love. Tom suggested that partnership love involves two people 'meshing together', and that an important part of this includes having an in-depth knowledge of the other:

"Just [knowing] the minutiae of what they like to drink and when they like to drink it, what food they like, knowing what clothes they'll be wearing ... All those kinds of things" (Tom, I/V).

Siân articulated a similar sentiment:

"[love] kind of hits you all the time in little tiny ways, when you are with somebody and they do something, they move in a particular way ... or they say something that is just really typical of the things they say. ... It warms my heart because it makes me think that that's you and that's what I love about you" (Siân, I/V).

In-depth knowledge of the other, then, was described as a necessary aspect of loving them. This was primarily because knowledge of the other precedes one's acceptance of them. As noted in the category of 'togetherness', there is an expectation that people who love one another will know each other well and accept each other as they are. Without in-depth knowledge of others, participants articulated that it was not possible to discern whether one loved them or not –

because one could not know what about the person one was loving in the first place. Knowledge precedes acceptance and acceptance precedes love.

Demonstrating one's knowledge of the other was also used as an important expression of love. Natalie reported:

"I show my partner that I love him by 'knowing him'" (Natalie, QQ).

Demonstrating knowledge of the beloved involved knowing things such as what gifts would be well-received, what help and care was needed and when, and knowing what activities/ideas would be of interest to them. A number of respondents described the necessity of 'considerateness' within love relationships and knowledge was communicated to be a part of this – the implication being that it is only possible to truly consider someone and their feelings when you know that person very well. Knowledge, then, was antecedent to other aspects of loving feeling and other acts of loving behaviour.

Care

The concept of 'care' is a big category that involves a number of different aspects, though all are interrelated. What differentiates these aspects is whether care is something that is physically 'done' or whether care is something that is felt towards and from the other. Both aspects of care are relevant to the love frame.

One (physical) aspect of care that participants described, involved helping the other in practical ways. Firstly, a *desire* to help the other (almost regardless of the cost to oneself) was used as an indicator of one's own feelings about the other. Assessing how much one would be willing to help the other was one way of distinguishing between liking and loving because it was an important way of assessing intensity of feeling. Secondly, respondents also communicated that

helping was an important *expressive* action. Relevant helpfulness (only possible through knowledge of the other) was articulated as a key way of demonstrating to the other person that you loved them.

“Trying to help people out with what they need without them having to ask [demonstrates loves to people]” (Laura, I/V).

“[To show love] you’d look after them, you’d look after their needs” (Susan, F/G).

Caring for others by meeting their physical needs was described as a way of both knowing love and doing love. There was a recognition that providing physical care was not always easy and so a willingness to make the effort was, for the loving individual, used as both an indicator and as an evidence of their loving feelings. Whilst for the beloved being physically cared for in a relevant and responsive way was one way through which people felt loved.

Helping the other, however, was often reliant on close physical proximity and there was an awareness that this was not always possible. Nonetheless an expectation of someone’s willingness to help, especially when helping would be difficult or challenging, was used as a way to assess their feelings towards you. This was especially relevant within sibling relationships where strong emotional togetherness and/or close physical proximity were not possible or experienced. A number of respondents commented that they knew their relationship with their sibling(s) was a loving one because of a mutual expectation that if any party needed help, help would be immediately forthcoming, regardless of how challenging that help would be to give. There was an example of this within one of the focus group discussions. The following is an extract from a conversation about sibling love and expectations of care.

Sarah: "If it's someone that you've grown up with".

James: "If you needed them they'd help you".

Ceri: "Yeah, say if you don't speak to them a lot but then all of a sudden you're in trouble and they know you are, they would just come and help you".

James: "Say if you've got two brothers who might argue at home, but if something happened to one of them, if they got in a situation, the other would help".

Sarah: "Like they could argue all the time but as soon as the parents tell the other one off they start sticking up for them, like me and my sister".

In her interview Ceit expressed a similar sentiment, even though she felt that herself and her brother "don't really like each other". Nonetheless she believed that her brother would provide care/help if she needed it, and articulated that she would do the same for him.

"If he needed me I'd be there. Or if I rang him and said I need you to do this for me, I need you to come and help me – if he could he would" (Ceit, I/V).

Willingness to help, even when it hadn't been articulated between people, was a way of feeling loved and demonstrating love to others. There was also, however, a sense in which a willingness to help was a way of understanding one's own feelings as being love. When talking about the friends whom she loved, Vanessa suggested,

"It's the type of love where even if I hadn't seen you for twelve years and you called me up and said 'I need your help', there is not a thing I wouldn't do to help you" (Vanessa, I/V).

Close physical proximity had not characterised any of these relationships.

Nonetheless, all the participants spoke about an, often implicit, expectation that help would be given should it be required. On this basis, individuals were willing to classify their relationships as being ones which contained love.

Whilst care was often described as meeting physical needs, there were many accounts in which participants described care as involving meeting emotional needs. Central to this was the idea of a lover 'being there' if the loved person needed them. 'Being there' involved giving both practical and non-practical help – listening, giving advice and distraction from problems were all noted, alongside communicating a willingness to step in and provide practical assistance should the need arise. The meeting of emotional needs was often communicated as something reciprocal. There was an expectation that both parties would 'be there' if they were needed. That being said, this was not always an equal expectation. The young people in the research communicated that their expectations of their parents 'being there' for them far exceeded their responsibility to 'be there' for their parents. This seemed to be important when people communicated the love they felt for their pets. There was recognition that the ability to 'be there' was limited outside of a 'peer-to-peer' relationship. Unlike practical care which was expressed on a regular, if not daily, basis, emotional care existed more as an expectation. Nonetheless, if an individual was required to 'be there' – either practically or emotionally – and failed to fulfil this expectation this was described as potentially damaging to the relationship and did make people question whether they were loved by the other.

Another aspect of care described within the research accounts was that of 'provision'. Provision related to meeting both physical and emotional needs – again knowledge of these needs was crucial in being able to meet them appropriately. Meeting physical needs involved providing food, drink and physical comfort to the other, crucially out of a desire to make the other happy rather than for the gratification of one's own need. Nonetheless, participants explained that to not

meet the needs of those one loves would cause emotional pain. Care, via provision, then, was described as meeting two needs: the immediate need of the beloved and the emotional need of the lover to care for them. This was especially true when providing physical, practical care came at the cost of one's own comfort. One respondent described caring for her sister with severe mental and physical impairments. At times giving practical help involved intimately cleaning her adult sister. This was a task that was undertaken not because of pay or even duty, but because to not do it would have caused pain to the respondent because of a desire to make her sister happy and comfortable. This respondent met her sister's need to have her physical requirements attended to, at the same time as meeting her own need to express care to her sister because of the love she felt towards her. Feeling prompted to care for someone else, especially at the expense of one's own comfort, was an important way of 'knowing' one's love for others. The actual provision of care was described as a way of expressing this feeling and 'doing' love.

Other respondents similarly explained that 'providing' for their loved ones was an important way through which they demonstrated their own feelings of love – cooking, cleaning, helping around the house were all seen as more than just necessary tasks to be accomplished, when they were motivated by love.

“[Showing love is about] nurturing and caring for them in small practical ways. It's not the doing of them for me, it's about ensuring that the person who is the subject of your love is catered for, is looked after” (Tom, I/V).

“[Showing love is about] Doing things to nurture, making sure the shopping is done ... buying things, making things, food” (Hannah, I/V).

Acts of care were, instead, seen as a way of communicating to the loved person that they were important and that their comfort was more important than the lover's

own. In this regard there was a strong connection between the conceptual categories of 'care' and 'prioritising the other'.

Caring through meeting physical and practical needs was not the only method through which individuals demonstrated their love for one another. Gift-buying was another form of practical provision that expressed a care for the other. Gift-buying as an activity in and of itself was, however, less important than the time spent considering whether the other person would enjoy the gift. Here knowledge of the other person was very important. Provision through gift-buying included buying gifts for specific occasions – birthday cards/presents for example – and also spontaneous gift-buying. Occasion-based gift-buying relied on demonstrating intimate knowledge of the other person

“When it’s somebody’s birthday [love involves] really thinking about their birthday and how you can make their birthday special. Rather than just ‘I need to get so and so a card’. ... when people aren’t as close you don’t, you just get somebody a card” (Ceit, I/V).

“Giving somebody something that you know is very special to them, so that they know you’ve really thought about it is showing that you love them” (Florence, F/G).

Spontaneous gift-buying was more about expressing that the other person was being thought about and considered as a matter of routine daily living, rather than solely for a specific occasion.

“If I see something I think they would like I might buy them it” (Laura, I/V).

“I might buy him stuff spontaneously if I know there’s something he’ll like” (Hannah, I/V).

Whether the purchasing of gifts was done for a specific occasion or spontaneously as part of a routine 'devotion' to the other, both required knowledge of the other

and it seemed to be this, rather than the gift itself, which was the offering of love in the present giving.

Another way in which respondents expressed the concept of care as relevant to love was through caring *about* the other's wellbeing, alongside caring *for* them. Most respondents spoke of being emotionally invested in the safety and well-being of their loved ones, such that they were afraid that something bad would happen to them. This sense of fear arose from an expectation of feelings of great loss should that loved person not be available to them any more – further emphasising the importance of closeness to loving relationships. Loving the other, then, often involved feeling very protective of them and wanting to keep them safe. This protective impulse seemed to arise out of the feelings of love, in that the greater the intensity of feeling, the greater the desire to protect and care for the other. This was one way through which people understood their own feelings as being loving rather than merely liking.

“[With love] I want to look after people and make sure they're alright whereas when it's the big wide world that you don't love individually, I don't feel like that. I don't want bad things to happen to anyone but I don't feel as protective” (Ceit, I/V).

It was also something that could be picked up on by others. Hannah suggested that part of experiencing love was feeling protected by her partner.

“The emotional feelings [of love] I suppose are feeling like the love is reciprocated and that it makes me feel safe and warm, warm and fuzzy and it's like someone putting a really hot thick velvet duvet around you and that you feel you are safe” (Hannah, I/V).

The extent to which the lover could 'protect' the other was dependent on the type of relationship. Parental love, certainly of younger children, involved a much

greater responsibility to keep their children safe than that experienced by adults within a partnership. Within peer relationships there was no less anxiety about the loss of a loved one, but there was less responsibility taken for their well-being – primarily because individuals did not want to inhibit their loved one's behaviour or freedom. Siân, for example, described having to put her own fears aside regarding the safety of her partner. Were she to verbalise her fears to him she believed that he may, for her sake, alter his behaviour in light of her anxiety and she described this situation as being problematic for her. Although she feared for his safety (and her own expectation of feelings of great loss should anything happen to him) she reported that it was more important for her partner to continue to do what made him happy, even at the expense of her own comfort.

“I want him to do it because it's important to him and it's his work and he loves it and so I can never say anything besides be safe, take – but I hate it when he's away” (Siân, I/V).

This was one example of love experienced through prioritising the care of other over the care of oneself. This sacrificial element of care was not always, however, described in negative ways. There was also a sense in which caring for and protecting the other could be a satisfying emotional experience in and of itself:

“It's a good feeling making someone else feel protected and cared for” (Tom, I/V).

Loving care, then, was described as placing a burden on the lover. This burden involved meeting physical and emotional needs, providing for others materially and continually negotiating personal anxiety. The degree to which a person interpreted their own feelings as being loving ones determined, however, the extent to which caring was experienced *as* a burden or as an external expression of internal feeling. Love, then, was communicated as mediating obligation.

Prioritising the Other

“I know that it’s love because I want her to be happy and that’s independent of my happiness” (Siân, I/V).

Many respondents spoke of a sacrificial element of love, in which the safety, comfort and needs of the beloved were felt to be more important than their own safety, comfort and needs. Importantly, it was this desire or willingness to sacrifice, despite the fact that it was unpleasant to do so, that distinguished love from other emotions for the participants within this research..

“I think it’s that love motivates you to do things that you wouldn’t normally do and it motivates you to do them willingly” (Siân, I/V).

“[Love is] Selflessness. Wanting the best for the other person, regardless of the effect that it has on you. Or not even noticing its effect on you. Regardless of the type of love, it’s that carelessness of self, that wanting what’s best for the other person. ... Recognising that someone else’s needs are greater than your own and wanting it – really wanting what’s best for [the other person]” (Vanessa, I/V).

The willingness to prioritise the other was an important way of ‘knowing’ love in relations to one’s own feelings about the other. The degree to which an individual would sacrifice their own comfort for another’s sake was used a way of assessing the strength of their feelings towards them. Laura described an occasion, for example, when she had accidentally hurt her younger sibling:

“I felt terrible for her and I wished that I hadn’t done it and I wished it had happened to me instead. I remember realising I loved her.”

Through this experience Laura came to understand her own feelings about her sister as being ones of love, primarily because of her desire to take her sister’s pain upon herself, despite this not being practically achievable. A desire to take on someone else’s discomfort as a proxy indicated to many participants a depth of

feeling beyond liking and was a central way through which individuals recognised and classified their own feelings.

Although predominantly a way of 'knowing' love, prioritising the other – especially when this *was* practically expressible - was also a way to communicate to a particular person, and to others more generally, that one individual loved another.

“[Love is about] putting other’s first, making time for people. Because sometimes they want you to do something and you want to do something else – but you don’t, you just do it ... whatever they need at the time” (Susan, F/G).

During her interview Doreen told me that her most precious love was for daughter. When asked how she knew that she loved her daughter her response was that “She was my whole life”. Despite describing herself as having never wanting children, she was aware of her intense love for her daughter, partly through the sacrifices she was willing to make for her.

“Everything revolved around her [my daughter]. I made sacrifices because we were on our own... I worked 7 days a week to try and get her things that her friends were getting and tried to make up for her father as well so she wouldn’t feel different from other children” (Doreen, I/V)

Laura spoke of experiencing a similar feeling when her daughter was born:

“I just suddenly realised that this was my baby and I loved her so much and I would do anything for her” (Laura, I/V).

Similarly Vanessa described the *action* of love as

“Displacing yourself from the centre and putting the other person there and trying to work out who they are, for them. I think that’s an act of love” (Vanessa, F/G).

Prioritising the other, then, was described as a way to both know and express love to others.

Alongside prioritising the other, respondents also spoke of an expectation (whether fulfilled or unfulfilled) that they would be a priority *to* another. Ceit said that she had learnt a lot about love from her mother's willingness to put her and her brother first:

“My mum used to say to us that she would do anything for us because she loved us... she'd say 'whatever you do you can always tell me because I love you so much' and it made me feel safe, that there was always somebody looking out for me” (Ceit, I/V).

Alongside feeling that someone's concern for you took priority over their own needs, being (sacrificially) important to another sometimes involved being given practical help, at the detriment of the comfort of another. Laura, for example, described a situation in which she had felt that her father had prioritised her needs over his own comfort by spending the day mending a car – something she very much needed – despite the fact that it was a very cold day and the task was very challenging. This demonstrated to her that he loved her, because he was willing to sacrifice for her. Another participant articulated it as “being number one to somebody and somebody being number one to you” (Ceit, I/V). Prioritising the other sometimes manifested itself through particular expressions, or demonstrations of love, as in Laura's example above. More often, however, it regarded the status that two people had with one another, in which there was an implicit understanding that you each mattered to the other and sometimes mattered more than oneself.

Intensity of Feeling and Focused Attention

“None of [the demonstrations of different loves are] any different from other loves. It's where it comes from in your heart that's different” (Florence, F/G).

This concept is an organising one in that it applies to all the concepts described so far. The intensity of feeling and the degree of focus (of attention) towards the other provided boundaries for knowing love. Participants spoke of the differences between 'liking' and 'loving' in relation to the intensity of feeling – with loving being seen as a deeper form of liking. What was important within all love relationship (as opposed to 'like' relationships) was the extent to which the individual desired and was willing to: experience togetherness; be physically and emotionally close to the other; positively communicate with them; provide emotional and practical care, including becoming emotionally invested in the well-being of the other; prioritise the other; and make the effort to 'know' the other. As standalone tasks most respondents spoke of being willing to do many of these activities for people they liked and even for strangers, i.e. provide practical help should the need arise. Nonetheless when these concepts/actions were demanded in combination respondents spoke of being willing to, and desiring to, do these things only for people that they loved. This indicated to them that what they were feeling was in fact love as opposed to another positive emotion such as liking.

“I suppose for people you like but don't love, the things that I said before about how you show people that you love them would still apply ... but it might not occur to you as much” (Laura, I/V).

“Well I think that good friends are the ones that love you and I think your other friends, they like you but they perhaps wouldn't go too much out of their way for you ... the good friends are the ones that love you and the rest like you, it's a bit more of a give-and-take relationship so they don't want to, it's almost like a monetary transaction, they don't want to pay too much in if they're not going to get it back out and I believe that people transact in [non-loving] friendships” (Hannah, I/V).

The most intense feelings were associated with love between partners and the love that parents have for their children. Intensity of feeling, and therefore willingness to act based on this feeling, did vary significantly depending upon the type of love

relationship. A 'hierarchy' of feelings and expectation was reported as follows, with those at the top providing the most intense feelings and demanding the greatest focus of practical and emotional attention.

Partnerships/romantic love

Family love

Parent's love for their children

Children's love for their parents

Love between siblings

Love for members of an extended (but known) family

Friendship (when it is a loving but platonic friendship)

Love for pets

Love for objects, activities and non-material things (i.e music).

Each of these types of love involved the same demonstrations and expressions of love but with varying intensity of feeling and involvement and with different expectations regarding the frequency and form of these expressions. There was also a sense in which one's willingness to prioritise the other is distinct according to relationships type. There were also different expectations about what will be 'received' from the other in return. Each relationship type is characterised by a different combination of these expectations.

Romantic love expects very intense feeling, willingness to sacrifice greatly for the beloved, very frequent and varied expressions of love – and an expectation that each of these will be received in the same proportion with which they are given.

Parental love for children, on the other hand, expects to experience the same great intensity of feeling and willingness to sacrifice but the forms of expression are fewer and parents expect very little 'return'.

A child's love for their parent also involves an intense feeling but less willingness to sacrifice for the relationship. Expressions of love are frequent but less varied. There is, however, an expectation of a return that goes beyond the original investment.

Love between siblings may involve only low to moderate feelings and few expressions of love. What characterises this relationship is a ready willingness to sacrifice should it be required.

Extended family relationships and **friendships** involve similar expectations: less frequent expressions of love and moderate intensity of feeling – though friendship may involve a greater intensity of feeling than that between members of a family. Family relationships, however, involve a greater expectation regarding sacrificial loving than friendships do.

Although much of the discussion focused on love for people there were some discussions about **loving 'things'** or **activities**. These were raised spontaneously by participants in both the focus groups and individual interviews. I asked both groups and individuals to elaborate on their experience of loving things/activities, and also how they demonstrated that love to others. The answers were congruent with their ideas regarding love for people, though the interpersonal aspects, such as physical proximity (closeness), were not especially relevant. Nonetheless some of the conceptual categories used to describe love between people can also be used to describe people's love for things.

Firstly, was the concept of 'togetherness'. Participants who raised the idea of loving things/activities said that their desire to spend a lot of time doing that activity/with the 'thing' was an indicator both to themselves and to others of their love for it – especially because there was a sense of having to choose to do that activity over an alternative one. Spending time doing the thing you love was done so for pleasure – the love of it – and also to demonstrate this love to others. Positive communication was a second key indicator of someone's feeling about an activity or object. Because there was no reciprocal interaction between person and object or activity, positive communication involved speaking well *about* the thing rather than towards the thing; this involved talking about it frequently and in a positive way. Finally 'care' was an important conceptual category used to describe a love for activities/things. This manifested predominantly through an emotional investment in the outcome of an activity/an object. If the participant described an activity, this emotional investment was described in terms of outcome – wanting to do the activity well and to keep doing it. For objects, emotional investment involved keeping the object safe, worrying that something bad would happen to it and feeling a sense of loss if it did. There was also an expectation that love for activities/objects involved less intensity of feelings, through expressions of feelings were expected to be more frequent

The Differences between Love and Non-Love

Differentiating between love and non-love was important because classifying feelings was associated with classifying relationships, which necessarily involved classifying the individuals in those relationships. One important distinction was between loving and liking. It was important primarily because liking involved fewer obligations to the other than love did. As within extended family

relationships and some friendships, 'liking' involved feeling similar feelings and demonstrations of similar behaviours to love but with far less intensity of feeling and emotional and physical involvement.

"Liking someone is a bit more circumstantial, like when you meet someone you might automatically expect to like them unless they do something to show otherwise. Like they must be a nice person until they do something that shows that they're not and you think 'yeah I like them'. But when you love someone it's something else" (James, F/G).

"I think intent and expectation are the two major differences – what you want to give of yourself, and what you expect in return. I would consider romantic love to be at the top of both lists (highest intent and highest expectations), whilst the other types are probably more affected by other variables" (Carrie, QQ)

'Liking' was described as a sort of 'watered down' love. It was almost 'universal' – in that participants proposed that we can 'like' strangers and people we have never met, whereas love was reliant on knowledge of the other, alongside an awareness of togetherness and closeness (either past or present). This made love very individualised.

It was also noted, or implied, that it was possible to demonstrate 'loving behaviours' without necessarily feeling loving feelings. This was a conversation between two focus group participants who were discussing demonstrating love to animals:

Susan: "You can do all those things [that demonstrate love] and not love them ... you can do them happily, willingly, and enjoy it but whether I'd [always] love them, I don't know?"

Carol: "It's the same with people".

Susan: "It's the same with lots of things. Childminders do all the things – they cuddle them, kiss them. They do all the things we mentioned before but they don't love [the children they look after]".

Similarly Mary noted that,

“We can act lovingly with a total absence of loving feeling ... especially in job situations. You have to sometimes in your job. With teaching you do all the things you’d do for your family but there’s no loving bond there” (Mary, F/G).

In a different focus group Rod, also a teacher, suggested that he had also had this experience of behaving ‘lovingly’ towards his students, whilst at times, really disliking some of them.

Not everyone agreed with Mary’s position, however, and Florence suggested that sometimes love does exist even when you’re caring for people as part of your job.

“Some carers genuinely love my mum. They do more than just ‘caring’. They come in on their days off to sit with her; to see how she is ... there’s genuine affection”.

After much discussion the group agreed with Carol’s positions: that “there’s a difficult dividing line between duty and love”. When questioned further, the group decided that what differentiated dutiful caring with loving care was the attitude with which the action was done from. Discernment of this attitude was through observing subtleties within interaction and included physical affection, smiling and eye contact. Loving care (rather than dutiful caring) was also associated with ‘doing more than is required’ and ‘selflessness’. Florence summed it up from her experiences,

“You can see the ones that are professional and do things caringly, and the one’s that go that extra mile. In the way that they look at her, in the way they come closer to her and enjoy getting some reaction from her ...and kissing her, giving her a kiss on the forehead” (Florence, F/G).

What began as dutiful caring was transformed into love over time; this transformation was recognisable through identifying the enactment of more and more behaviours/attitudes associated with ‘love’.

The differences between love and other emotions, and loving and other actions, were described in such a way that they were qualitative not quantitative. This made the differences hard to discern at times, as in the discussion regarding Florence's mother above. Nonetheless, participants spoke about being able to discriminate between love and non-love, primarily through the demonstration of a *number* of ways of 'doing' love, rather than a single behaviour that was associated with love, but did not define it in its entirety. Because of this it was not possible to identify one analytical category that captured the essence of love. Instead, what tipped liking (or duty) to loving was the enactment of some (or all) of these categories in combination. Recognising love as love was associated with the cumulative effect of many behaviours, rather than the demonstration of one action that 'is' love.

The Love Frame

Having identified and explained the analytical categories found within this research it is worth summarising these findings to provide an overview of the 'love frame' as identified within this research. The findings of this empirical study can be neatly summed up by something that Vanessa said during a focus group discussion. Within this conversation the group were discussing how one demonstrates love to others and how one recognises love between others. She suggested that

"Proximity seeking would be the easiest way [of demonstrating love]. Those of us who love others try to be in their company as much as we can ... we spend a lot of our time touching them, gazing at them, attending to what that they're saying, attending to their needs ... we take their path over others. The choice of how you spend your time and where you direct your attention usually alerts others to the fact that love is going on here"
(Vanessa, F/G).

This was not an entirely comprehensive statement that included all aspects of what was found within this research. Nonetheless it captured the essence of what many people communicated to me in various ways. With this in mind the love frame can be summed up as follows: Love involves perpetually choosing. It necessitates choosing between people, in terms of time and emotional involvement. There are choices to be made about who to spend time with and how much, which person to prioritise over others and over yourself. This sometimes comes at a cost – the fear of a loss of love can induce anxiety and prioritising the beloved over one’s own comfort can mean that love involves sacrifice. But doing so brings much reward. When love ‘works’ the gains can be great. Two individual people can experience a fusion in which they are no longer just individuals but are now ‘together’. When love is going well it promises a safe ‘backstage’ where you can be yourself without fear of judgement. Being loved means being cared for, physically and emotionally. It means being known by somebody and being loved anyway. Love exists in a space where you can expect to be attentively listened to and where interactions are respectful. It cherishes closeness and treasures affectionate touch. Love affirms your worth as a valuable human being and more than that, when you are prioritised over others your ‘valuableness’ is not only affirmed but intensified. In all things, Love says ‘I love *you*’.

This is a summary of the love frame as it was articulated within this research:

- Love is directed to individual others
- Relationships are elective
- Love means taking responsibility for the well being of the loved other
- Love engages in acts of care
- Love has knowledge of the other person

- Love respects the uniqueness of the other person
- Loving behaviour involves attentive listening and physical touch
- Love prioritises the loved other
- Love is a feeling
- Expectations of love's longevity are variable

The love frame proposes a view of love that is individualised and particularised.

The love frame does not propose a generalised 'love for all', instead it loves *particular* others because of who they are, not who they 'represent'. Love is associated with feelings, but does not exist merely at this level. Instead feelings are demonstrated to others so that they may be known by them. Two purposes are fulfilled through the enactment of loving feelings: one is other-focused, in that loving behaviours are done to make the beloved feel good. The desire to express love to others fulfils a second purpose, however, one unrelated to the feelings of the other and instead related to the feelings of the self. Love is also expressed to the beloved because doing so feels good to the individual expressing it. Love, then, was described as being both internally and externally motivated. Nonetheless, love *is* predominantly focused on the other and one way to discern between love and non-love is to identify the degree to which one is other-focused in one's orientation.

Love prioritises the well-being of the other through sacrificial caring that is either 'hypothetical' – because such care has never, or is not currently, necessary; or it is done as part of a routine devotion to others as people experience life 'together'. Responsibility characterised descriptions of love because a loving individual is considered to be responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of the beloved. This is achieved by meeting physical needs through providing

practical care, meeting emotional needs by being attuned to the beloved, caring for the feelings of the other through respectful communication and accepting the other as they are. Knowledge of the other underpins all these actions because meeting any need, whether practical or otherwise, begins with knowing what the need is for that particular individual. Because of this there is no set list of 'loving behaviours' that is constitutive of love. Having said that, within the descriptions of loving relationships there were commonalities between the needs of individuals. These included practical needs such as food, comfort and physical affection. They also included emotional needs such as the affirmation of value/worth; being seen as someone who is loveable. Meeting the needs of the beloved requires an orientation towards them and away from self, even though the self may be gratified in this process. The 'other-focusedness' of love is narrow, however, and is applicable to those whom we choose to be in a relationship with, or whom we are 'naturally' in a relationship with through circumstances of birth. This makes 'loving' a largely elective practice. The implications of a love frame containing the categories it does are explored in subsequent chapters.

Conclusions

Love was described by the participants in this research in similar ways to one another. This was not what respondents were expecting! Individuals communicated within their interviews, focus group discussions and in the qualitative questionnaires that love is an individual phenomenon that is difficult to describe because it is so personal. Despite each individual holding such a perspective on love, it was not a position supported by the data. There were significant similarities between research accounts, such that it was possible to

identify themes of ideas within them. These themes were as follows: togetherness, closeness, positive communication, knowledge, care, prioritising the other, and intensity of feeling and focused attention. Although they were presented as discrete categories, in reality they were not reported in such a way. There was no single behaviour, for example, that articulated the analytical category of 'togetherness' that said 'this action creates feelings of togetherness but does nothing else'. Instead each analytical category was connected to each of the other categories, which when taken altogether, represented a love frame.

Some of the connections between categories were stronger than others. The categories of 'togetherness' and 'closeness', for instance, shared many similarities in terms of the behaviours used to generate and express the experiencing of these concepts. Spending time together (togetherness) in close physical proximity (closeness) expressed love to others, whilst a desire to participate in this time together indicated to oneself and to others that 'it was love going on here'. Nonetheless, 'togetherness' and 'closeness' were not analogous to one another such that the categories can be collapsed into one another. Their 'functions' in knowing love and doing love may be the same, and their methods for doing so, similar, but they were not described in wholly the same ways. Feelings of togetherness can, for example, be generated by past closeness but close physical proximity is not always necessary for these feelings to be sustained. Likewise, it is possible to spend time in close proximity with others and not feel emotionally 'together' with them. Work situations may necessitate spending regular amounts of time in close proximity with the same people and yet love is not a part of the relationships. The examples given within the research accounts were the roles of teacher and carer – both require spending prolonged time together and regular

sharing of space, yet love does not typically characterise the relationships between teacher and pupil or carer and client.

The findings of the research, then, proposed the love frame as multidimensional; as an organising framework that consists of a number of ways of feeling about and being with one another, that when taken together allows the individual to consider that 'love' is present. Actual manifestations of love should be expected to vary from this account of the love frame according to relationship type and character of the lover; the description of the love frame must not, therefore, be taken as a 'blue-print' for loving relationships. Rather, the love frame described here is a collection of ideas that were common to the research accounts in this study. It 'typifies' shared ideas about love, even when it does not typify actual experiences of loving. This is not a deficiency of a frame analysis, but instead its strength. Conceptualising love in this way allows us to access what is 'held in common' between members of a society.

Accessing the social dimension of love, through exploring the way it is codified, enabled a process of explaining social action within this sphere to begin. The rest of the thesis explores the implications of a love frame conceived of in the way that it was. It does so by surveying existing sociological literature on love. As outlined in the Introduction, there are three claims that sociology has made about love. The findings presented here propose that the first two of these claims can be supported: that love does matter within individual personal lives and impacts on the ways in which they use their time and effects how they choose to behave; and individuals do use love as a way of generating lasting social connections that give them a sense of belonging or 'closeness' with others. Much of the rest of the thesis, however, explores the third claim which is that love has a much greater *potential*

as the foundation of social solidarity, achieved through the construction and maintenance of wide scale social bonds. It does so by examining the literature that makes this claim about 'genuine' love, alongside exploring the reasons why this potential remains unfulfilled – primarily because of a trend towards particularised and individualised love.

Chapter two argues that there are two dominant approaches to love within sociology – those that see love as having an objective basis and one which is inherently moral, and those that view love as a social phenomenon and propose that love in modernity has become increasingly individualised. These two perspectives were compared to the love frame, as articulated within this research, and chapter seven articulates these comparisons in order to empirically 'test' both viewpoints. This was an important aspect of the project because, at the time of writing, much of the existing sociological literature exploring love lacked empirical confirmation. The relevance of the findings to existing areas of sociological inquiry, such as the sociology of the family are first explored in the following chapter, however, and it is suggested that a sociological understanding of love has much to offer areas of study outside the sphere of emotions.

Chapter Six: Understanding and applying the research findings

“For individuals who have to invent or find their own social setting, love becomes the central pivot giving meaning to their lives”

– Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 170

If love is indeed *central* to who we are and what we do as people then this must mean that it impacts on all areas of life beyond just our intimate relationships. It is claimed within sociology that love is the central way in which a sense of belonging to society is generated *because* it has an effect on more than just our personal lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991). The necessity of a ‘sociology of love’, then, seems to be self-evident. It is, however, an under-theorised emotion and many social theorists (Jackson, 1993; Johnson, 2005; Langford, 1999; Luhmann, 2012; Reiss, 1960; Smart, 2008) have noted the relative lack of attention that Sociology has paid to love; each scholar acknowledging that although [contemporary Western] society appears to value the emotion highly, the discipline that purports to study such a society has relatively little to say on the matter.

A number of reasons have been proffered for this. Primarily, it is argued, love has been associated with the ‘private’ internal life of individuals and therefore outside the purview of social theorising (Smart, 2008; Johnson, 2005; Jackson, 1993). According to Stevi Jackson (1993: 207) love has long been considered ‘indefinable, mysterious, [and] outside rational discourse’, and thus outside of the realm of explanation and understanding. Paul Johnson (2005: 26) similarly maintains that love’s supposed ‘intangibility’ and resistance to definition has led to

its inarticulation by the discipline, suggesting that 'if individuals find love difficult to "put into words" so too has sociology'. Certainly, there seem to be questions about love that may be dealt with better by other disciplines; the question of whether there is an objective 'genuine' love may be best suited to exploration within philosophy or theology, for example. Carol Smart (2008) suggests that within the Academy, emotions on the whole have been *treated* as if they are the domain of psychology and evolutionary biology; to explore emotions, then, would be seen to be 'abandoning sociology'.

This thesis disagrees with this proposition, proposing that having a sociological understanding of love is necessary. It proposes that love has a social dimension and it is from this position that the behavioural and relational aspects of love can be thought through. If one fails to recognise the extent to which ideas about love are shared by members of a group, then it becomes difficult to understand how cultural representations of love can exist, and challenging to identify meaningful ways of demonstrating loving feelings to others, without slipping into naturalistic descriptions of 'impulses' (Hochschild, 2003a; Williams, 2001; Lupton, 1998). Moreover, it has also been noted within the sociological literature that understanding love is more important than just understanding the role of intimate relationships in the lives of individuals; it can tell us something about the nature of social bonds and the morality of a society. Previous chapters explored this claim in greater detail.

It has been said that all good research generates more questions than answers (Ross, 2012) and so this chapter explores some of the questions raised by the findings of the research by examining the conceptual categories associated with the love frame and proposing avenues for future research. This chapter also

proposes that having a working understanding of love in contemporary society is useful beyond discussions directly relevant to understanding individual love relationships or widespread social bonds. It does so by proposing ways in which love intersects with other aspects of our lives, by suggesting ways in which the research could contribute to other fields of sociological enquiry that is beyond the remit of this thesis to explore in-depth.

Togetherness and Closeness

Togetherness

Feelings of 'togetherness' were described as being generated, predominantly, by spending time in co-presence with others. Spending time together, then, was articulated as a very important aspect of love relationships. Participants suggested that the desire to spend time with someone was often an indicator of one's own feelings – a way of knowing love; whilst actually spending time with the beloved was a way to demonstrate feelings of love to them. Importantly, togetherness was also central to people feeling loved by others. Because spending time together is necessary for an individual to feel loved, this means that anything that has an impact – positive or negative – on our use of time must have implications on our love relationships. This is particularly relevant when looking at the amount of leisure time available to spend time with others according to the standards and norms of a society. More or less available time will likely have consequences for feelings of 'togetherness'.

In a society that mandates consumption, and promotes employment to do so, those whom are unable to work, or choose not to, can come under scrutiny (Bauman, 2005). Mothers of young children are subject to such scrutiny and often

encouraged to work outside the home, alongside fulfilling their duties as a mother. In 2014 the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the UK, George Osborne, proposed extensive reforms to childcare provision in order to encourage more mothers to work outside the home. It was reported that 'George Osborne, the Chancellor, wants to see nearly 500,000 more women in the workplace by the beginning of 2016' in order to create a more stable economy (Dominiczak and Swinford, 2014). Some research has also suggested that mothers who work are not just good for the economy but are also good for their children. Research by McMunn *et al* (2012) proposes that an ideal situation for children would be to live in a household with both parents and in which both parents work. This scenario, they suggest, positively affects children's educational achievement and/or social mobility.

If, however, spending significant amount of time together is a crucial indicator of love, what impact does both parents working outside the home have on children's sense of being loved? Does having two working parents positively contribute to a child's overall well-being? This is not a question that can be answered by this research, but it is an important consideration, especially given current discussions by the UK Government to discourage non-working parents from staying at home and caring for their children. Future research, then, could focus on exploring the concept of love *with* children. This would ensure that research conducted with adults is not just extended to include children. This would enable children to have their own voice within discussions of love and how it may impact their family lives. A cross-cultural analysis of children's feelings, specifically focusing on the extent that children feel loved in societies where working practices are different may also be beneficial. This may be particularly relevant when looking at working practices elsewhere in Europe, where there is a strong

expectation that children will enter affordable full-time childcare from a young age in order to enable parents to work.

Spending time together was not only considered important for familial relationships but also for romantic relationships; in fact, the burden of 'togetherness' appeared to be *greater* within intimate relationships of choice. Having said that, research on long-distance relationships suggests that there are no significant differences on reported levels of 'relationship satisfaction, intimacy, dyadic trust and the degree of relationship progress' between those in long-distance relationships and those in proximal relationships (Guldner and Swenson, 1995: 313). Nonetheless, 'togetherness' was communicated as a crucial element of love relationships in terms of understanding one's own feelings and the feelings of another. This might suggest that time together in proximity is only one way to negotiate the experience of 'togetherness'. Nevertheless participants spoke of *choosing* to spend time together as an act of loving and a way of knowing one's own feelings. This makes the act of choosing to love someone a repetitive action rather than a one off event and this requires regular opportunities to exercise this choice. It would be interesting to examine how people in long-distance relationships draw upon the 'love frame', or explore if there is a separate frame altogether, when regular proximity is not an available option and individuals cannot, therefore, make love and proximity-related choices on a regular basis. It may be that spending time together is not necessary under certain circumstances, or it may be negotiated differently within different contexts. These are, however, matters for empirical enquiry.

Whilst expectations of the regularity of co-presence in generating a sense of 'togetherness' may be variable, who you are when together with others was

described as centrally important to feelings of emotional ‘togetherness’. Authenticity was described as a prerequisite of ‘togetherness’ because knowledge of the other person was felt to be essential to loving them and genuine knowledge of the other requires them to present themselves authentically. It was also described as important for feeling genuinely loved; only when one is really known by others – through authentic self-presentation – is it possible to feel emotionally ‘together’ with them. Being authentic was considered risky because it led individuals to feel vulnerable to negative judgements and criticism. ‘Love’ was considered a safety net because, according to a number of respondents, being loved means being accepted – flaws and all – and loving someone else requires one to love all of the other, without judgement. Thus the opportunity to ‘be oneself’ was proposed by the participants as an ideal of all love relationships but especially so within romantic partnerships.

Authentically ‘being oneself’, then, was considered an obligation of the individuals involved in the relationship. This aspect of ‘togetherness’, however, rests on the notion of having an ‘authentic self’ that is free from performative demands. Goffman (1969) queries whether there is anything of a ‘true self’ to be exposed or hidden at whim and the self has been described by Goffman as

‘not an organic thing ... [the performer and] his body merely provide the peg on which something of collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time ... the means for producing and maintaining self do not reside inside the peg’

Goffman, 1969: 252-253

Here Goffman is proposing that self-identity is not an inherent part of the individual; rather, it is a collaboration that is achieved with and through others as a ‘product of joint ceremonial labor’ (Goffman, 1967: 85). This thesis is *not*

suggesting that there is no authentic self, but instead highlights the potentially problematic nature of 'being oneself' in a relationship and the underlying assumptions such a notion relies upon.

In June 2014 a prominent female pop star revealed that she breaks wind in front of her fiancée. The fact that this was newsworthy was interesting in itself but much of the commentary around the issue communicated that the expectation of 'being ourselves' may not extend to all people or be about all things. One of the comments on the issue in the article by *Daily Mail Online* (2014) stated,

'I would never fart in front of my boyfriend, don't get me wrong, I will happily lounge about in PJs, no makeup, be relaxed, but I think it's gross when girls fart or belch in front of their boyfriends, it's like: do you want to kill the romance? are you trying to become their sibling?? Think about it: girls he works with don't burp or fart in his face, so when he gets home and he has a girl sitting there just releasing wind like one of the lads, it'll make the girls in public seem probably more attractive- more feminine, more mystery to them. Just don't do it girls, not a good recipe for romance'.

'HR'

What this girl was articulating is that *some* aspects of 'ourselves' are acceptable in personal relationships but that others are not and that this may be different depending on who we are. This illustration, for example, suggests that there may be an imbalance with regards to gendered expectations of authentic presentations of self, though further empirical enquiry would be required to ascertain the extent to which this is the case.

Whether our sense of who we are is generated by something inherent within us or is created through interaction with others, participants described an expectation that within love relationships we are free to express ourselves without the consequences that may occur within other social interactions. Love relationships were considered a place to 'be real'; in this respect they can be

thought of as Goffman's (1969) 'back stage'. The extent to which we ever cease to manage the 'presentation' of ourselves is, however, questionable and is a potential area for future development of research on love. Goffman (1969), for example, argues that we remain sensitive to how others may see us, even when we are alone. This seems especially critical when we talk about ways to 'do' love. If there are expectations about ways we should and should not behave towards loved ones, then presumably we need to be mindful of these at *all* times – not just in the presence of generalised others. It could be argued, then, that the demand to be a competent 'lover' becomes *more* important behind closed doors, not less so.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the interactional demands associated with love are loosened when others are not there to witness it. Two participants in the research suggested that within some relationships, love may 'look' different depending on whether it is being publically performed or demonstrated to the loved person only. It would therefore be interesting to explore the ways in which the interactional demands associated with love change, if at all, according to time, place and the presence of others. Moreover, both participants (separately) suggested that issues of time, place and the presence/absence of others were especially relevant dynamics within some love relationships, particularly those existing within a context of domestic, interpersonal violence and abuse²². They suggested that love may be demonstrated very differently depending upon the circumstances that the lovers find themselves in. At times loving may involve behaviours typically associated with the 'love frame'; whilst at other times it may involve violent expressions of feelings of

²² Both participants worked professionally within complex family units where violence and abuse were common occurrences. Both had different job roles servicing two different cities and the participants did not work together.

possessiveness and jealousy. Both participants reported that both victims and perpetrators consider both types of behaviour demonstrations of love.

A sociology of love, particularly theoretical articulations of the love frame, may therefore be helpful when seeking to understand love that 'looks' different to how we might expect it to look. This might be especially relevant when harm is caused by the lover to the beloved, because this defies the obligations to care for and prioritise the other through positive communication. It is also likely that it involves a change in the nature of 'closeness', especially with regards to the sharing of personal space as a consensual and mutually satisfying way of 'doing' and experiencing love. Looking at the ways in which both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse negotiate shared ideas about love may therefore be helpful in understanding the phenomenon of abuse within the intimate sphere.

Closeness

In the research the concept of closeness involved both physical and emotional proximity to another person. It included the sharing of (personal) space and physical and affectionate touching, in the form of hugging, kissing and hand-holding. It was described by research participants as an important means of demonstrating love, as something necessary to feeling loved and also as a helpful indicator in the interpretation of their own feelings as being love. Behaviours promoting physical and emotional proximity were expected to be spontaneous – that is unprompted – regular expressions of feeling and not actions done out of duty or demand from the other. Loving, as opposed to routine, closeness was also considered to be relational because it required one person initiating physical proximity/affection and the other person accepting and receiving it. Physical and

emotional closeness, then, were considered reciprocal actions that were dependent on input from both parties.

Interestingly there were participants who articulated that this aspect of the love frame was difficult for them for them to do, but they were aware that other people expected them to perform behaviours associated with 'closeness' on a regular basis, as part of the demonstration of the love that existed between them. One participant articulated that she was reprimanded by close friends for failing to hug them the requisite amount! She said that it was something her friends expected as part of a demonstration of love, but that such affection did not come 'naturally' for her because it was not something she experienced from her family whilst growing up. She also said that she was 'much better' at showing affection than she had previously been, because she had 'practiced' being affectionate on a number of occasions. This was interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it suggests that our formative experiences are instructive when learning about how to do love – the frame – as well as affecting our own ability to 'comply' with its requirements. It also indicates that our understanding of the frame can change over time, demonstrating the praxis involved in utilising frames; people are active in drawing on frames, even if they are not active in creating them.

Moreover, her experience supports Goffman's (1974) description of frames as compelling. He argues that that even when we have agency to act outside of the frame, often we do not. As noted within chapter three, compliance to the requirements of the frame may be beneficial because it enables interaction, helps people navigate social situations with relative ease, and generates a sense of 'normality' (Misztal, 2001). The experience of this participant may also, however, indicate that frames are not merely compelling, but also controlling. The

potentially controlling aspect of frames is under explored within Goffman's theorising. Goffman himself states that he is disinterested in understanding where frames come from (Goffman, 1981), nor is he concerned with analysing how power may be played out through frames (Goffman, 1974). It could thus be argued that Goffman's frames are 'neutral'; that they organise experience by providing a *tool* that enables and constrains meaning-making and behaviours in social life, but are not normative, merely normalising (Misztal, 2001).

But whilst the neutrality of Goffman's frames appears self-evident, when applying the concept of frame to Goffman's wider work²³ it is possible to infer a critical analysis within his theorising. Goffman's work on mental illness, for example, can be seen as an exploration of the ways in which mental illness is 'framed' *and*, importantly, the implications that this has on those subject to the 'mental illness frame'. Thus, despite Goffman's (albeit implicit) description of frames as neutral, it can be argued that there is a space within his theorising on frames to remain cynical about aspects of frame, even if one does not set out to be so.

With regards to this research on the love frame, the ways in which the respondent was reprimanded and re-educated about the frame may signal a coercive element of the love frame. Rather than neutrally organising our experiences of love – beneficial because it enables us to navigate relationships with ease – the love frame may create 'lovers' who are subject to rules about what constitutes love and how to do it. Individuals, through reflexively monitoring their

²³ Although Goffman (1974: 13) argues that he is 'not addressing the structure of social life', I think a case can be made for seeing his work in *Frame Analysis* as expressing Goffman's social ontology. It could be argued that his earlier work on stigma and mental illness are explorations of frames, despite not being described as such.

own thoughts and behaviours, 'police' not only themselves, but also others – pulling them up when the rules of the frame are not adhered to or utilised appropriately. Additional theoretical work on the ways in which power and frames are related would be beneficial to explore such issues, as it was beyond the scope of this thesis to examine these ideas in detail. Such work may include exploring the functional aspects of the compelling/controlling aspects of the frame, alongside looking at the construction of the love frame and how it has evolved over time. Some work has already sought to trace the 'history of love' (Luhmann, 2012; Kaufmann, 2011; Giddens, 1992). It would be interesting, however, to trace the development of the analytical categories associated with the love frame, exploring how ideas about 'closeness' or 'knowledge' came to be associated with love and the ways in which those concepts have changed over time.

One avenue of exploration may be the ways in which modern technologies have/are changing the experience of 'closeness' within love relationships. Given the increasing use of technology to facilitate non-proximal interaction, it is easier now than ever before for individuals to begin to relate to one another without ever physically meeting. Yet, if on-going, co-present physical and emotional proximity are relied upon to bring about feelings of closeness between 'lovers', what impact do virtual technologies have on people's feelings of 'closeness' with others? Do internet dating practices or long-distant 'virtual' relationships, for example, where physical closeness is less easily available (or perhaps not possible), still lead to love? Bauman (2003) proposes that technology has already changed the nature of love through a modification of experiences of closeness. He notes that although we are living geographically closer to each other than ever before, the instantaneity and efficiency of modern communication technologies mean humans are

increasingly and metaphorically distant from one another and consequently, the nature of community has changed (Bauman, 2003).

Bauman (2003) claims that mobile technologies have changed the nature of 'proximity' and 'distance', such that these concepts are now 'virtual'. It is now possible, he argues, to be proximal without being 'close', that is to be near one another but not *engaged with* one another; and to be close (engaged) without being proximal. This pattern, Bauman argues, has serious and negative implications, because whilst non-virtual closeness elicits moral responsibility for the other, virtual closeness does not. Viable and readily available alternatives to face-to-face interactions already exist and individuals can now be connected to one another and at the same time remain 'faceless' through the use of mobile phone and computer technologies.

Using Levinas' work, Bauman (1990) argues that the face is a central component of morality because the act of looking into the face of the other is crucial in recognising the humanity inherent within them; it is through looking upon the face of the other that prompts our moral instinct and we come to realise our responsibility for them. In societies in which in-person interaction is normal, members of the community exist in face-to-face relationship with one another and through it they remain sensitive to the humanity of other people: members within a community have 'faces' that demand moral behaviour. Bauman notes that unknown 'others' – strangers from outside communities – often have no 'face' and therefore the same standard of moral behaviour is not required when interacting with these people. His critique of the increasing use of technology in modern society focuses on the extension of this category of 'facelessness'; what was once applicable only to 'strangers' has, through technological innovation, extended into

our closest relationships. Bauman (2003: 64) argues that 'homes have become multi-purpose leisure centres where household members can live, as it were, separately side by side'. In modern society people live *with* one another but not *for* one another and consequently they cannot be described as living 'together' (Bauman, 1990).

The findings within this project did not point towards such a trend in which individuals experience or desire to experience a lack of closeness or engagement with those they love. Rather, wanting to be close to others was a key indicator of knowing love and being close to others was a crucial element of doing love. Moreover, another's desire and initiation of closeness, alongside willingly receiving this behaviour, was an important way of being loved. Nonetheless, this research did not explore love with those in non-proximal relationships, nor did it explore the use of technology within proximal relationships. I would not, therefore, wish to reject Bauman's analysis of the implications of technology on *social* relationships; rather I wish to tread carefully so as not to overstate these implications within *loving* relationships. Additional research may be able to provide empirical confirmation of Bauman's position.

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'Togetherness' and 'closeness' were closely related concepts within this research. They both focused around sensations and experiences of sharing ideas, opinions, space, time and place. Desiring to be 'together' and 'close' with others was used as an indicator of feeling and an important way of experiencing love. There was a strong expectation that love was a 'safe space' within which one can 'be themselves', though as noted, this may be more problematic than it first appears. The expectation that 'togetherness' and 'closeness' will characterise love

relationships may create greater interactional demands as people seek to maintain these aspects of the relationship. Moreover, the requirements of the frame are likely to influence how one expresses themselves whilst in co-presence with loved others. 'Being oneself' may not, therefore, be feasible if one does not 'feel' like expressing love in ways expected by the other – in this respect one's duty is to the relationship, rather than to individual self-expression; this is likely to require compliance to the tacitly agreed upon rules about how each party will go about 'doing' love. Whilst it could be argued that people's expressions of love are therefore controlled or limited by the frame, it could also be argued that fulfilling one's obligations with regards to the other's expectations is an act of love in itself and has a moral dimension. This argument will be developed further in chapter seven.

Care, Knowledge and Positive Communication

Care

Care was described as an important aspect of loving because it is both indicative and illustrative; it helps an individual understand and categorise their own feelings and demonstrates these feelings to both the beloved and to others observing them.

Loving care was described, primarily, as about meeting physical and emotional needs and knowledge underpins such care, because demonstrating love through caring means meeting *relevant* needs in appropriate ways; this was seen as being impossible without in-depth knowledge of the other person.

Motivation was described as another important aspect of loving care. Participants explained that a crucial difference between loving care and other types of care is the attitude with which the care is performed: loving care should

be other-focused and done with the well-being of the other in mind. This is straightforward when thinking about love relationships but is potentially more complex when thinking about the provision of paid care. One focus group participant, for example, suggested that some of the professional carers that look after her elderly mother genuinely love her, that ultimately they perform their caring role towards her primarily out of love and secondarily as their paid employment. This initiated some discussion within the group about whether this was possible – can one truly love that for which one labours for but for money instead of love itself? There was also some discussion about whether paid care and loving care are professionally incompatible because they have different boundaries. The consensus opinion within this group was that care for loved ones should be motivated solely by an emotional investment in their well-being. The introduction of money into this provision of care was seen as ‘muddying the waters’.

Existing theoretical work has explored the connections between emotion and care work in general (Ungerson, 2005; Folbre and Nelson, 2000) and the role of love within care work in particular (England, 2005; Folbre and Nelson, 2000) and this will not be replicated here. This research did not seek to understand what role love has or should have in care work and the main focus of discussions of ‘care’ within this project was on love and the importance of ‘doing care’ as a part of ‘doing love’. Nonetheless, research on the love frame may be able to contribute to theoretical discussions of paid and unpaid care through an understanding of the boundaries of love-motivated caring and the ways these are enacted in daily living.

The research findings suggest that the love frame demands caring action but insists that this must be motivated *solely* by the desire to care for the other. At

the same time our society prioritises economic autonomy and consumer practices (Bauman, 2005). These competing demands may create situations within which some individuals become economically disadvantaged in order to fulfil their loving obligations. Alternatively an individual providing a lot of loving care to a loved one risks appearing less loving if they are remunerated for their time and effort to do so. Similarly if an individual chooses to 'outsource' their care to professional bodies they may also be seen as operating outside the love frame by failing to demonstrate adequate care for the other and prioritising their own needs over those of the beloved. By looking at how individuals draw upon and navigate the love frame in these situations, a sociology of love could contribute to existing theoretical work on unpaid, care-related labour. Exploring whether, or to what extent, there are emotional barriers to individuals seeking support and/or remuneration for the unpaid care work they do, may enable the creation of specific interventions designed to overcome these barriers. More research would be needed to explore these issues in greater detail.

Within the research accounts 'care' was not just about meeting physical and emotional needs but was also related to 'providing for' others. Gift-buying was one way in which individuals demonstrated their love by providing material goods for others. This is a trend that other theorists have similarly noted. Daniel Miller (1998), in his analysis of love in contemporary, capitalist society, suggests that under the pressure of secularization, religious devotion has been substituted by the romantic ideal of love. He argues that love and capitalist ideals have become intertwined, such that we use the ideals of capitalism as a guide for the ideals of love. The provision of material goods has, according to Miller, become an important way in which individuals express their feelings of love to one another.

Miller's (1998) work argues that whilst some of our routine shopping is unreflexive, it is 'often dominated by [our] imagination of others' (Miller, 1998: 3). He argues that we orientate our purchasing to our significant others – either when buying items for them, or, when we buy for ourselves we question whether others will like the item that we are purchasing. Replacing religious devotion, shopping demonstrates a 'routine devotion' to those we are buying for (Miller, 1998: 3).

Purchasing, then, has become a way to demonstrate our love to and for somebody. This is interesting because it proposes a concrete way in which love has been impacted on by a consumerist society. There were certainly elements of this idea within the accounts provided by research participants. Many, though not all, suggested that the purchasing of goods for individuals whom they loved was a way of demonstrating love to them. As Miller notes, this gift buying was not done unreflexively but intentionally and thus required knowledge of the other. It could be argued, then, that rather than merely being a way of demonstrating 'routine devotion' to loved others, gift-buying is in fact a concrete way to demonstrate knowledge of them, which is a significant aspect of loving someone. Nonetheless the presence of gift buying in the accounts of love may indicate, as some theorists have suggested, that love *has* been changed by consumer practices (Bauman, 2003; Miller, 1998).

Knowledge

Knowledge was described as being of utmost importance in doing love and feeling loved. Knowing someone well was considered a prerequisite of loving them, primarily because it was considered impossible to know what it was about the

other person that one loves, if one does not know them in the first place. This suggests that loving a person involves loving particular traits or aspects of them and this may be why 'authenticity' was considered so important in generating feelings of 'togetherness'. Knowledge was also considered an important means of doing and feeling loved. Being known and accepted by others was described as facilitating emotional closeness; demonstration of that knowledge and acceptance of oneself, through certain actions of the other, expressed to participants that their partner/family member/friend was invested in their well-being and led to people feeling important and loved by others. Consequently, individuals recognised that the actions that enabled them to feel loved were important ways of demonstrating love to others.

The connections between 'knowledge' and 'doing' love centred on the concept of 'care'. This included physical 'care *of*' the other and also a more emotional 'care *for*' the other. Whichever way 'care' was being expressed, however – physically or emotionally – both were considered expressions of an underlying interest and concern in the well-being of the beloved. Knowledge was considered an important aspect of this care because it enabled individuals to support others in a relevant and meaningful way. The more relevant the care was the more it was seen to be motivated by love, as it required an investment of time and energy in accumulating knowledge and demonstrating this appropriately. Caring, performed through appropriate demonstration of relevant knowledge, can, then, display devotion to the beloved on a regular basis. On these grounds the degree to which knowledge-filled caring can be considered a moral action is explored in subsequent chapters.

The strong connections between feeling known and feeling loved may be relevant in other areas of life beyond intimate relationships. The sphere of social care may be one such area. Understanding the different ways that people *feel* cared for could enable those in caring professions to improve the care that they offer to people in order that more people would feel satisfied with the care they are receiving. The British Social Attitudes survey (2014) suggests that 65% of people feel satisfied with the care given by the NHS. This means that 35% feel less than satisfied with the current NHS provision of care. Whilst the data does not report why individuals felt less than satisfied there is clearly scope to improve rates of satisfaction within healthcare provision. A sociology of love may be able to contribute to discussions about how to go about this. Although the aim of healthcare is not for a service user to feel *loved* by care providers, it is hoped that service users would feel cared about, as they were being cared for by them. The connection between knowledge and feelings of being cared about in relation to love, may also be beneficial in understanding what leads patients to feel cared about within healthcare settings. Further research could explore whether this is a helpful avenue of enquiry.

Positive Communication

'Positive communication' with regards to love was described as involving the use of both verbal and non-verbal cues to communicate feelings of love to others. Saying 'I love you', for example, was seen as being especially important in partnership and family relationships but much less so in friendships. The importance of saying or hearing the words 'I love you' from a partner or close family member was something that respondents commented on, even when this experience was missing from their own lives. A couple of respondents reported

that they had never told their parents that they love them and never heard them say it to them. Nonetheless, it had become an important expressive technique they used with their own children and partners. This may indicate that 'emotional frames' change over time – so that what was once given less importance is now emphasised more. Comparative research exploring love frames in the past could be beneficial in this regard, alongside longitudinal work that tracks the love frame over time.

Saying 'I love you' was seen as so important within the love frame that a couple of participants noted that it can be used by individuals to justify inappropriate behaviour such as violence or sexual unfaithfulness. One respondent spoke about the dangers of putting too much trust in 'I love you' when existing behaviours indicated otherwise. She had had professional experience of working with women who have been abused by their partner and she said that a common justification used by women for staying within the relationship was continually being told 'I love you'. In fact, the abusive behaviour was often justified by the partner by appealing to love as the fundamental cause of the violence: 'It's only because I love you so much' (Vanessa, I/V). Verbalising feelings can be seen to override any other indicators of love, or their absence. Other respondents noted, however, that expressing emotions both physically (through acts of care, for example) and verbally is important, because without both aspects being present, the intensity of feeling and/or motivation behind behaviour may not be interpreted correctly.

'Positive communication' was fundamentally about interaction and the necessity of managing interactions in a way consistent with feelings of love, or at least consistent with desired expressions of love. Despite participants describing

'positive communication' as being of central importance in doing and knowing love, each of them found it challenging to describe which specific behaviours were associated with demonstrating love. All the participants felt that they were loved but struggled to identify, at least initially, what led them to feel this way. This suggested that their actions with regard to their love relationships were largely unreflexive. Nonetheless, with specific questioning participants were able to identify behaviours that they believed expressed love in a meaningful way and these were outlined in chapter five. Observational work may be valuable in establishing the accuracy of these reports, as the unreflexive nature of loving interaction may lead to a difference in what people say they do and what they actually do in practice.

Ideas about what action constitutes appropriate loving behaviour were common amongst participants, suggesting that there are shared rules that govern interaction and enable individuals to interpret the actions of others as 'loving'. The unreflexive way with which these were enacted in daily life indicated that the interactional rules around love are likely to be tacitly understood and acted upon, rather than reflexively engaged with, at least on a day to day basis. This supports Goffman's (1972) proposal that interactions in general are governed by 'seen but unnoticed rules'. It also supports the proposal of this thesis that ideas about love are 'held in common' and loving experiences are governed by frameworks of 'conduct rules'. This is important because, it is argued, the existence of rules creates obligations for individuals to follow them; fulfilling one's obligations can therefore be considered a moral action, because not fulfilling them has (negative) implications for those around you. This is especially true with regards to love. This issue will be developed within Part II of Chapter Seven in greater detail.

Ways of demonstrating love to others through positive communication were fairly standardised across similar types of relationship. Kissing, for example, was a common way in which individuals demonstrated love for one another. Depending on the relationship type, kissing may be used in different ways, but amongst the same type of relationships amongst different people kissing was used as communicative action. Nonetheless there was often a sense of exclusivity regarding some gestures or communicative actions. As noted, saying 'I love you' was often reserved for partners and close family members. The limited use of a particular gesture or action was itself a method of communicating to others. Reserving a particular behaviour for particular others often conferred a status to them that 'set them apart' from those around them. A good example of this might be the exclusivity of performing behaviours associated with sexual intimacy to only one's partner. Like 'knowledge-filled' caring, reserving certain actions for particular people demonstrated devotion to them and was another way of demonstrating care for others.

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'Care', 'knowledge' and 'positive communication' were distinct though interconnected conceptual categories. To some degree 'care' could be given without knowledge of the other because 'caring' appeared to have a set of meanings aside from its association with love. People spoke, for example, about doing similar acts of care for strangers and friends as they would do for lovers. What transformed routine and standard acts of care into acts of loving care was intention and knowledge. Having knowledge of the other was described as being vital for providing *relevant* care to them and it was the provision of relevant, particularised care than led to individuals feeling loved. Moreover, 'knowledge-

filled' caring may be considered a *moral* action because it displays devotion to others on a regular basis.

'Positive communication' was in some way distinct from knowledge as it appeared that the behaviours associated with positive communication were much less tailored to particular individuals and were instead common ways of communicating love to others. The categories of 'positive communication' and 'care' were, however, closely related. Communicating positively with others, through gesture, communicative action and speech, was considered a necessary aspect of demonstrating care for the emotional life and feelings of the beloved. Some of these behaviours, although fairly standardised across similar types of relationships, were reserved only for those people whom were loved. It was another means through which individuals exhibited dedication to loved others. It may also, then, have a moral dimension and, again, this is explored in greater depth in chapter seven.

Conclusions

Although love can be considered a 'private' and 'personal' emotion this chapter has demonstrated that its scope stretches beyond the immediate sphere of personal relationships and instead impacts on areas of our life that can seem at odds with love. The economic sphere is an example within which love can seem to stand in tension to the logic of this area of social life. Yet understanding the role that love plays in personal decision-making, especially around issues such as child-rearing and work, or paid versus unpaid care work for example, could enable a

researcher to better understand how and why individuals do what they do, especially when what they do makes little 'rational' sense.

This may be especially relevant within circumstances in which individuals appear to act in ways outside their interests: a parent choosing to work inside the home at the cost of greater economic security, for example. Policies and incentives to facilitate mothers 'back to work' may be unsuccessful if the motivations for choosing to stay at home with children are not understood. Love, it was proposed, may be one such motivation because the 'love frame' conceptualises a loving relationship as one in which individuals who love each other spend time together in co-presence and also one in which the lover sacrifices their own needs for the sake of the beloved. Within this context, then, it would make sense that a parent might opt to forgo economic benefit in order to benefit from experiencing 'togetherness' and 'closeness' with their child. Having a working understanding of love may help to facilitate such understandings.

Within the sociological literature it has been claimed that sociology ought to understand love because it is a means through which individuals create their own identity and a way in which individuals generate a sense of belonging (Illouz, 2012; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). This chapter explored some of the aspects of social life that love may have an impact upon and proposed possible avenues for future enquiry. It also suggested ways in which social conceptualisations of love may affect an individual's sense of who they are alongside shaping their beliefs about others. 'Authenticity' in love, for example, was something that was experienced not only as an obligation (of oneself to be authentic) but also as an expectation (of others to be authentic).

Participants described their own 'authenticity' as a necessary feature of being in a love relationship. This shaped their own 'presentations of self' and thus impacted on their own behaviours. Authenticity also operated as an expectation and this obliged other people to behave in certain ways in order to fulfil this expectation. If 'authenticity' were no longer a part of the love frame then love may not have the same impact on one's identity formation within relationships. This research suggests that at this time, however, expectations and understandings of love, especially in regard to 'being yourself', are pivotal in guiding behaviour and constructing/presenting identities within relationships. The findings, therefore, support the claims found within the literature that a sociological understanding of love is necessary for understanding one's relationship to oneself and also to others. Moreover, as noted within the previous chapter, individuals within this research hierarchically 'ordered' their many relationships with others on the basis of their understandings of whom the other was to them. Doing so enabled them to construct a social 'network' within which they occupied the principal position and their relationships 'spread' out in order of importance from this central point. Evaluations of others, especially in relation to love, then, were described as pivotal in constructing a person's network of belonging.

Chapter Seven: Comparison of Data and Theory

Having explored what the existing literature on love *thinks* love 'looks like' and identified in chapter five what the love frame may actually 'look like', this chapter provides a comparison between the two, seeking to understand the continuities and differences between the positions. The conclusion of this chapter – and the thesis as a whole – is that the sociological literature is inadequate at explaining the complexities of modern loving. There is, for example, a lamentation within some of the literature on love, suggesting that 'genuine love' has become corrupted and as such, love, as something true and authentic, has been or is becoming lost. What remains, it is claimed, is a modern love that prioritises choice and individuals who are self-absorbed and who lack the skills to love authentically. The data within this project suggests, however, that yes; some of these trends exist *but* that the element of choice, for example, is not necessarily negative. Rather, there is much to be admired within modern relationships; choice within relationships may actually have a moral dimension, because in so choosing – and not just once, but over time – we demonstrate to others that they are valuable to us.

Ultimately, it is suggested that because there was no amoral description of love within the data, there is little evidence to support the claims of thinkers such as Bauman (2003), Fromm (1995) or Scheler (1973). I argue that this can be reconciled to an extent through applying Goffman's work, especially the important stress he places upon obligation, performance and the moral dimensions of interaction. Within this frame of understanding, then, the 'doing' of love can be seen as moral behaviour; love often goes against one's personal interests and involves sacrifice and a prioritising of the other. The love frame teaches us that we

ought to 'do' love even when we do not want to and this, I argue, is in part a moral obligation, not just a practical interactional necessity, nor merely an expression of an internal feeling.

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Chapter two outlined two dominant approaches to sociological theorising about love: those who emphasise love's objective, moral nature and explore the connections between love, morality and solidarity; and those who emphasise that love in the modern world has become increasingly individualised, focused on choice and conditionality. As noted in previous chapters there are theorists who occupy a theoretical position in both perspectives - Bauman and Fromm both suggest, for example, that there exists a genuine love that is intrinsically moral and the proper basis for social solidarity. They also claim that within modern society love has become 'corrupted', such that now what we think of as being love is really a type of 'pseudo-love' that is individualised and undermines solidarity (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to assess the claims that there is such a thing as 'objective, genuine love'. Moreover, it could be argued that it is beyond the scope of sociology as a discipline to establish the truthfulness of the claim, and instead it ought to be dealt with elsewhere, perhaps in partnership with philosophy and theology, which already have much to say on the matter (Jeanrond, 2010; Moseley, n.d.).

This is not to say that the matter of whether love is objectively real or not is not an important one - it is, especially because, according to Fromm and Bauman, morality and social solidarity are inherently involved in 'genuine' loving. Any deviation from this 'real' love could, then, undermine morality and solidarity. Any deviation would have consequences for the ways in which social relationships

operate on a day to day basis; wide scale social change would be necessary in order that 'man's social, loving nature is not separated from his social existence, but becomes one with it' (Fromm, 1995: 104). Regardless of one's position on this matter, however, there *are* implications of thinking about and doing love in the way that we do, whether there is an objective basis to this or not. Examining the socially shared understandings of love by way of looking at how love is 'framed' in society, guides us to a description of the way that it 'ought' to be demonstrated.

This is not the 'ideal ought' as found within the 'being-for-the-other' sociological approach to love, but is the socially agreed upon normative 'ought' that gives meaning to otherwise meaningless activity and guides behaviour in a socially shared world. Part of the function of a frame is as a *normative* framework that guides behaviour, provides a background understanding of events and enables there to be a common definition of the situation (Miztal, 2001). The 'oughtness' of a frame is enabled by the presence of rules and frame conventions and is governed via rule-following behaviour and sanctions for failing to fulfil one's obligations in this regard. Normality, which is achieved through the co-operation of social actors who (consciously or sub-consciously) follow the rules, can therefore be thought of as a moral disposition and (implicit) commitment to social order. Miztal (2001) suggests, however, that for Goffman, rule-following behaviour is not the only way that normality is achieved. It may also be constructed by a normalising power or it may merely be a cynical performance of normality. Nonetheless, Goffman emphasises the ways in which the interaction order is central to the presentation and preservation of a sense of self, and thus even when normality is not constructed/maintained as a commitment to social order, there is always a moral element within the interactions because constructing/maintaining the self is a

moral endeavour; it is always in collaboration with others and so interactions, in a very meaningful way, are moral contributions to the construction of selves.

Therefore, examining the 'normative ought' can tell us *something* about morality by utilising Goffman's work on the ways in which morality is played out within interaction. It enabled me, for example, to explore the 'morality' of love apart from its conceptualisation as 'real'.

With this in mind this chapter first seeks to compare the empirical findings with theoretical articulations of love, in order to assess the extent to which either approach can be said to represent lived experiences. Part I of this chapter, then, explores the continuities and differences between the love frame as articulated in this research, and the two perspectives outlined in the previous chapter. It is argued that neither approach adequately captures the essence of the love frame, but both contain elements that are congruent with the findings. Love, this work proposes, is not as individualised as some theorists claim, nor is it orientated to others as much as other theorists would like. The conclusion of this section is that the data indicates that the current love frame is not one which loves one's *neighbour* as oneself because who we love is too narrow to encompass the concept of 'neighbour', but nonetheless loves sacrificially and takes responsibility for the beloved. Thus both positions overstate their case somewhat.

Secondly, and in light of the emphasis that some theorists have placed on the moral potential that love has, the moral dimensions of current understandings of love for social life will be examined in Part II, alongside exploring love's role in bringing about social solidarity. I argue that if loving one's neighbour is necessary for the maintenance of 'true' solidarity (Scheler, 1973) then society is not currently experiencing true solidarity because it does not love its neighbour. It is the

contention here, however, that Scheler's ideas regarding mutual co-responsibility and solidarity can be reconceptualised using Goffman's work on the moral dimensions of interaction. In this way, then, social interaction in general can be seen as fulfilling certain aspects of the command to love one's neighbour. Moreover, there are particular aspects of the love frame that indicate a commitment to others through the concepts of 'care', 'togetherness' and 'prioritising the other'. It is concluded that current understandings of love may be too narrowly applied to close relationships to provide the foundation of a social solidarity based on a generalised love for others. Nonetheless the behaviours of love associated with the love frame do promote solidarity between people on a smaller scale, i.e. within families or couple relationships.

Part I: Exploring the literature in light of the data

One of the primary uses of the empirical research within this study was a tool of comparison between itself and existing literature. Much of the sociological analyses of love are theoretical in nature and lack empirical confirmation. This section first compares the findings of the research with the approach that views love as an attitude of 'being-for-the-other'. Initially the sociological literature associated with this approach is summarised and then comparisons are made between the research findings and Fromm's four categories of loving: care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. This is because within these categories all of the main aspects of the approach in general are represented.

Secondly the 'individualisation of love' perspective is compared with the data. It is argued that the distinctive aspect of this approach is the emphasis on love as a feeling directed towards particular others who are chosen.

Particularisation and choice, then, were explored within the research findings; both aspects were found within the data thus strengthening the analysis within the 'individualisation of love' approach. It is also claimed within this perspective that because individuals are now responsible for their choices, people have become selfish and focused on having their own needs met. The descriptions of love within the research, however, emphasised the necessity of prioritising other and this aspect of the data was incompatible with the literature in this regard.

Comparison: the being-for-the-other approach to love and the research findings.

Erich Fromm (1995) is one of the few authors who attempts to articulate what is involved in the practice of loving. 'Loving' for Fromm is an active rather than a passive process – one in which certain things must be 'done' – and in order to achieve *mature* love there are certain basic elements that must be present: care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. 'Care' involves labouring for something: 'one loves that for which one labours, and one labours for that which one loves' (Fromm: 1995: 22). Being 'responsible' for someone requires responding to them, not out of duty but out of joy. The ability to see and accept someone *as they are* is the fundamental basis of 'respect' and is the only way to preserve the integrity and individuality of the other. 'Knowledge', motivated by concern or care, is a requisite of this respect. Taken altogether, 'Care, responsibility, respect and knowledge are mutually interdependent' (Fromm, 1995: 25) and for Fromm these are the ways that we 'do' love. Unlike many of the theoretical ideas examined in chapter one, Fromm is keen to provide a descriptive analysis of what one must do in order to 'be loving'. Fromm's work, then, provides something of a 'manifesto' for loving behaviour. These aspects of his work are compared with the research findings.

Alongside proposing how we 'ought' to love, Fromm also proposes *who* we should love, suggesting that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. Importantly the category of 'neighbour' encompasses all persons by virtue of their shared humanity. Fromm's work claims, however, that the skills required to love authentically in this way have been lost in modern society. The 'art of loving', he claims is nowhere to be found due to the inherent properties of capitalism which undermines all aspects of genuine love.

Likewise, Scheler (1973) also claims that capitalism undermines not only love, but solidarity because it characterises each finite person as an 'individual person' without acknowledging the existence or necessity of the individual as a 'collective person'. For Scheler, both are evident within each discrete individual – but neither must be prioritised. Like Fromm, Scheler (1973) argues that co-responsibility for both the self and others is the foundation for social solidarity: Fromm argues that loving one's self is fundamental to our ability to love others. Without self-love, he argues, 'loving one's neighbour as *oneself*' not only fails to be constructive, but is also destructive. Scheler's work on co-responsibility similarly points to this same idea.

Responsibility is also central in Zygmunt Bauman's (2000; 1990) work. Like Fromm and Scheler, Bauman proposes that responsibility involves responding to the needs of the other. Because the needs of the other cannot be known in advance there are no set ways in which we 'do' love outside of this readiness to respond. That being said, Bauman (2003) does emphasise the importance of attentive listening because it both communicates to the other that they are valuable and expresses one's readiness to respond. Bauman too claims that capitalist society – with its focus on meeting one's own desires – is damaging to

love. Capitalism, Bauman argues, corrupts the impulse to love the other (through being responsible for them) and instead it concentrates its efforts on being responsible for oneself – often at the expense of the other. The technologies of capitalism create strangers who communicate but do not connect and thus attentive listening is limited because the other's inherent value is minimised.

The proposed contrasts between 'genuine' love and capitalist 'pseudo-love' are stark within these theoretical conceptualisations. Moreover, Fromm and Bauman claim that 'genuine' love is not found within modern society because capitalism and the values of consumerism dominate and these are incompatible with love. It would be expected then that the empirical data would include limited, if any, discussion of concepts associated with 'genuine' loving. An absence of responsibility for others, of attentive listening, and of discerning and conveying values in and to others would also be expected. Interestingly, however, there were many similarities in the ways in which the respondents spoke about 'doing' love and Erich Fromm's (1995) comprehensive analysis of loving behaviour in *The Art of Loving*. There were also similarities between the ways in which the respondents spoke about the necessity of positive communication, affectionate touch and sacrificial loving – prioritising the other – and Bauman's work on love and responsibility. This would suggest, then, that Fromm and Bauman's analyses somewhat overstate the degree to which genuine love has been lost. There was, however, a distinct lack of discussion of self-love within the data, suggesting that the conceptualisations of love within the love frame were not congruent with the edict of 'loving one's neighbour as oneself'.

Care

Fromm suggests that '*love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love*' (Fromm, 1995: 21, emphasis in original). He suggests that the demonstration of love through care is one of the ways in which love is observable. He also proposes that the essence of love is to 'labour' for something and 'to make something grow' (Fromm, 1995: 22); caring, through love, can help people to flourish, or it can stop them from withering. The concept of loving through 'caring' was an important aspect of the love frame articulated by respondents in this research. It involved both practical and emotional care for the other and was achieved by meeting physical and emotional needs. Respondents within the research spoke about providing practical help to those they loved in order to enhance their quality of life – analogous with Fromm's idea of 'helping them to flourish'. The care described in the research involved regularly taking on practical and necessary tasks or providing assistance when life was a struggle and in this way corresponded with Fromm's idea regarding 'stopping them from withering'. These aspects of the findings, then, support Fromm's conceptualisation of care.

Importantly for Fromm, care provided out of love is not dutiful and there was certainly an element of this sentiment within the accounts provided by the research participants. Participants spoke of providing emotional care by 'being there' to provide emotional support when necessary. Much of this caring action was done because the lover was invested, because of the love they felt, in the well-being of the other person. Thus an additional motivation for offering or providing care for others was to *demonstrate* those feelings. Respondents used care as a way of making their feelings observable to those they love, as a way to demonstrate their 'active concern for the life and growth' of the other. There was an expectation that caring for a loved one was done as a way to enhance the life of the beloved and

this was desired by the lover, rather than performed out of duty. An important aspect of caring for someone – in a loving way, rather than dutifully – was the manner in which it was done; loving care was done with respect and affection. Positive communication and tender affection between people demonstrated, for the research participants, that the care that was being ‘done’ in that moment was motivated by love rather than duty. It also demonstrated a care for the other’s *emotional wellbeing*. Nonetheless there was a sense of duty articulated with regards to family relationships, with some respondents suggesting that some elements of care were done because they were expected and were routinised ways of expressing love without necessarily being underpinned by an experience of loving feeling in the moment of care. In these situations love was not considered absent, but more ‘dormant’ than at other times.

Interestingly, within the research there was an element of care which related to ‘providing for’, rather than ‘labouring for’, those who are loved. This aspect of care moved away from the concept of ‘labouring’ for someone, as it was more concerned with using (purchased) material goods to demonstrate emotional feeling. This may indicate that some elements of consumer values have crept into ideas about love and the way it is demonstrated. Nonetheless there was significantly more discussion of care in relation to helping behaviours and concern with the beloved’s emotional wellbeing, than in the provision of gift. This suggests that gift giving was less significant than other aspects of care and thus the consumerist dimension of the love frame should not be overstated.

Respect and Togetherness

Within this research ‘respect’ meant a number of things and was included as part of other conceptual categories; there was therefore no conceptual category

identified as 'respect' from the data analysis. Nonetheless there were significant overlaps between the way in which Fromm relates 'respect' to loving and the ways in which respondents talked about love. One action that demonstrated an attitude of respect for the beloved was positive communication. People spoke about positive communication as a way of 'doing' love – listening to others and speaking pleasantly to them was a part of being in a loving relationship. It was also used as a way of judging the status of the relationships between other people. When asked what they would expect to see between two people who loved one another, positive communication, including the phrase 'I love you', was a common response. This was also echoed in discussions of physical affection. One of the reasons given was because it demonstrated an attitude of respect for others and communicated that their feelings were valuable. In this way there were similarities between the love frame and Bauman's proposal that positive communication – especially attentive listening – is important because it is the way that we bestow value to others; positive communication promotes human dignity by demonstrating to others that we believe that what they think or say is valuable and provides a unique contribution to the world, one that is irreplaceable. Moreover, a lack of interactional respect (for one or both of the parties) was associated with loss of love, primarily because it demonstrated a lack of care for the other's emotional life or feelings. One participant, for example, 'knew' that his wife had stopped loving him because she had stopped being interactionally respectful – the communication from her towards him was no longer overwhelmingly positive.

Another way in which respect was connected to loving was through the concept of 'togetherness', primarily the ways in which togetherness was brought about by the mutual experiences of 'being oneself' and having this respected and

demonstrated as such by both parties. This was very similar to the way Fromm (1995) characterises the relationship between love and respect. Fromm argues that loving respect is the ability to see and accept someone as they are, rather than as how we wish they would be. There is thus an expectation for Fromm that love is unconditional because it accepts and respects the uniqueness of each individual. Although the participants did *speak* about love as being unconditional, they also described relationship breakdowns as a consequence of the (undesired) behaviours of the other. This potentially undermines the idea of unconditional loving within the love frame.

Nonetheless 'respect' within the research accounts was predominantly associated with an *expectation* of being respected and accepted by those who love you and this, it was suggested, generated feelings of 'togetherness'. This feeling of 'togetherness' was understood through a sense of knowing, accepting and respecting the uniqueness of the other, whilst being known, accepted and respected by them. *Not* being accepted or respected by another was also communicated as a threat to love. A lack of acceptance of who the other is was considered a barrier to love because without a respectful acceptance of the other's uniqueness, togetherness – experienced as unity – was not possible.

Knowledge

Before one can experience unconditional acceptance and togetherness, however, one first has to be known and this makes knowledge and love inseparable in the love frame. 'Being known' and 'knowing the other' were mentioned throughout most of the research accounts and knowledge was communicated as a prerequisite of love. This is because loving the other was considered impossible without knowing what it is you love *in* the other. A number of participants noted that there

were family members that they did not love and this stemmed from the fact that they did not really know them. This was not an active choice to not love them; instead it was described as an *inability* to love them because they were not known and had no shared history. Conversely, having *some* in-depth knowledge of another, even when this was past knowledge – such as that between siblings and brought about by a shared childhood – was often enough to provide a foundation for love. This type of love was described as being less active and less intense than the love experienced in other, more current relationships but it was, nonetheless, experienced as a love between people that was based upon knowledge of the other.

The necessity of knowledge for love demonstrated some similarity between Fromm's claims regarding love and knowledge and those found in the participant accounts. Fromm (1995) proposes that having knowledge of the other is a requisite of having respect for them. He also argues that gaining such knowledge of the other should be motivated by care and concern for them. If knowledge is sought for other reasons, this is not love. Having knowledge of the other, then, is always for the other's benefit and not one's own. Whilst this motivation was not explicitly described by participants, discussions of knowledge were always in the context of caring for someone or being cared for by another and thus appeared similar to the ways in which Fromm described rightly motivated knowledge.

Whilst there was continuity between the research data and Fromm's discussion of love in respect to the concept of 'knowledge', there were differences between these and Bauman's work on the connection between love and knowledge. Bauman's work on love is intimately connected to his ideas regarding responsibility and the primacy of responsibility before any other orientation. Bauman claims that we must love the other *before* we know the other because our

responsibility to them is part of our sociality. To make knowledge a condition of loving is to strip love of its moral potential; whenever we make love conditional upon the character or actions of others we open up the possibility of choosing *not* to love them and denying our responsibility to them. Scheler (1973) similarly suggests that prior to being perceived or known objects have value to us. Having said that, neither Scheler nor Bauman's conceptualisations of love are impersonal – both claim that to love someone is to recognise and validate the uniqueness of the other. Knowledge, then, is an important part of love, but is not a prerequisite for loving action. In describing Scheler's work, for example, Vacek (1982: 166) suggests that

‘Our love illumines the ideal essence of the beloved person. Beginning perhaps with only a few actions or expressive gestures, we grasp intuitively the direction of development required by the person's value essence. This unique essence is, of course, not fully given in a few actions, but from them a perceptive heart can sketch the first lines of the beloved's identity’.

What both Scheler and Bauman appear to be pointing to is a unique call to responsibility and one that is not contingent on in-depth knowledge others or on expected future outcomes. Rather, this comes from a capacity to love that belongs to the subject that is loving. Scheler (1992: 34) describes it as a ‘spontaneous impulse of love’ that ‘finds a specific goal, an opportunity to apply itself’. With regards to ‘knowledge’, then, there was some divergence between the theoretical literature itself and also between the literature and the research findings. The main difference seems to be that within the literature knowledge of the other is part of an ongoing process of loving but it is not its decisive cause. Conversely, within the research findings knowledge was considered a necessary part of loving and one that needed to exist prior to it.

Responsibility

Responsibility, according to Fromm, is a voluntary act that involves responding to the needs of another human being. Fromm tells us that,

The loving person responds. ... He feels responsible for his fellow men, as he feels responsible for himself. This responsibility, in the case of the mother and her infant, refers mainly to the care for physical needs. In the love between adults it refers mainly to the psychic needs of the other person.

– Fromm, 1995: 22

Whilst Fromm proposes that responsibility is important but only as one aspect of the ‘art of loving’, Zygmunt Bauman proposes that love *primarily* involves *responding* to the needs of the other. Unlike Fromm, then, Bauman claims there is no specific way in which to do love – because responding is a relational and spontaneous practice²⁴. Likewise Scheler conceptualises loving action primarily as one which takes responsibility for others – both as an ‘individual person’ and as part of the ‘collective person’; we are to respond to a person as a distinct and unique individual and as a part of the total social unit. When this responsibility is mutual social solidarity is generated and maintained. Loving through ‘responsibility’, then, is of central importance.

Whilst the people who participated in this research spoke about responsibility in relation to loving others, *who* one is responsible for is significantly different to the ideas contained within the ‘being-for-the-other’ theoretical approach. Fromm and Bauman both suggest that the truly moral action of loving is

²⁴ Nonetheless in *Liquid Love* Bauman (2003) proposes that loving involves caring for the other by preserving their dignity and humanity through respectful communication, primarily through the act of listening. It is from this position of attentive listener that we are able to understand the other in order to meet their needs. There are links here between the concept of responsibility and that of respect.

to 'love thy neighbour as thyself' and this means that one must be responsible for oneself *and* one's neighbours – not in response to what the neighbour does or does not do but because I am obligated by their mere being there. Within this model of 'brotherly love', to love somebody – to be responsible for them – is 'the actualisation and concentration of the power to love' that comes from the loving subject (Fromm, 1995: 47); it is not, therefore, a response to who someone is, but that there is someone there at all. The obligation (of responsibility) is not generated when people enter into elective relationships, nor is it created through relationships of birth or circumstance. For Scheler, Fromm and Bauman responsibility is universal because it is unconditional. This was not, however, the type of responsibility that was described by participants within this research. The category of person 'eligible' to be a recipient of loving responsibility was very narrow, being confined to intimate partnerships, close family relationships, and some friendships. Even then, the participants described their sense of responsibility for others as being conditional on having received adequate 'love' themselves, demonstrated through positive communication, physical affection, care and closeness. Responsibility thus appeared to be a reciprocal act, though whose obligation it was to 'go first' was unclear.

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In summary, there were both continuities and differences between the research findings and conceptualisations of 'genuine' love found in the literature. All aspects of 'genuine' love – care, respect, knowledge and responsibility – were evident in the data, but the ways in which these were made manifest differed to the literature. This was especially true regarding *who* one loves. 'Genuine' love is both universal *and* personal – it seeks to perceive and nurture the distinctiveness of each

individual by protecting and confirming the 'dignity of bearing a unique, irreplaceable and non-disposable value' (Bauman, 2003: 80-81). Because this obligation applies to all people by virtue of one's shared humanity with them, it is also non-exclusive at the same time as being individualistic; it involves the recognition of humanity in all persons at the same time as recognising the unique humanity in each person. It is this universalised individualism, alongside the conceptualisation of love as a capacity and not a feeling that, according to Scheler (1973), Fromm (1995) and Bauman (2003; 2000), that gives love its moral potential.

In the research, however, love was talked about in relation to the unique aspects of specific others but it was described as a *feeling* that one has as a response to only a few people. The obligation felt towards others (to love them) was closely related to the intensity of loving feeling that one had for them and this varied according to relationship 'type'. Depending on whom the other was, the expectations regarding the intensity of loving feelings, varied. The most intense feelings of love were for partners that had been chosen and also towards one's children. With regards to partnership love, the element of choice and the intensity of feeling were strongly connected: lovers were chosen precisely because they brought about an intense feeling in the lover. Family members were, however, described as being loved out of both joy and duty and so intensity of feeling was expected to be variable. Friends were loved but were more often liked and thus intensity of *loving* feeling was often sporadic and episodic, being associated with a particular occasion or circumstance. Once 'love' was established to exist within a relationship participants described performing a number of behaviours that Fromm, Bauman and Scheler associate with love. Care was an important aspect of

loving for the research participants. As was knowledge. Participants were also prepared to take responsibility for those they loved, often sacrificing their own comforts as part of this process. The conceptual category of 'prioritising the other', for example, involved making the other person one's main concern. It also involved, however, making selections between many others and directing love as per these choices. This was significantly different to the diffuse love proposed as 'genuine' within the 'being-for-the-other' perspective. Overall, then, love was much more particularised in the research findings than it was in the 'being-for-the-other' approach to love, despite much overlap in the demonstrations and doings of love between the two.

Having said that, that there would be such a contrast is accounted for in both Fromm (1995) and Bauman's (2003) work because, they argue, genuine love has been corrupted by capitalism such that there has been an 'easing of the tests that an experience must pass to be assigned as "love". ... the standards have been lowered' (Bauman, 2003: 5). In this respect there is much theoretical overlap between Bauman and Fromm's analyses of modern love and the ideas contained within the individualisation of love frame.

Comparison: The individualisation of love frame

Whether one agrees with the idea that there is 'genuine love', almost all theorists writing about modern relationships note that love has become increasingly individualised (Illouz, 2012; Luhmann, 2012; Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Fromm, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991). This, it is argued, mirrors a changing society in which the individual has come to be considered the primary social unit. The consequence of this is a change in the nature of solidarity and the connections/relationships that exist between people.

When 'the group' was the primary social unit within society solidarity was generated spontaneously by and through the community (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991). This type of solidarity no longer exists *automatically*, however, and so it is the responsibility of the individual to generate and maintain connections with others. Love is the modern way we attempt to accomplish this task (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). It is not, however, an easy task. Responsibility operates through a now sovereign individual and autonomy is a central feature of the modern person; one's duty is to oneself, over and above one's duties to others (Bauman, 2003; 2001; Giddens, 1992; 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Consequently Individuals find themselves in a situation where they are expected to generate social bonds through interpersonal relationships *and* protect their individual autonomy. This results in a paradoxical desire to remain free whilst simultaneously being connected to others and this makes love challenging; individuals battle to 'be themselves' at the same time as 'being together' (Bauman, 2003).

Giddens (1992; 1991) argues that this process has an emancipatory potential because it removes duty from love. No-one need feel obligated to others because one's primary responsibility is to oneself. Individuals are therefore free to pursue personal fulfilment, no matter what the cost to the other and all in the name of love. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) are not so optimistic; they claim that the modern paradox has changed the nature of intimacy and introduced notions of risk in to relationships, such that there is no stability in romantic love anymore. Zygmunt Bauman is less optimistic still. He claims that love has become a product to be *consumed* like any other and 'like other consumer goods, partnership is for consumption on-the-spot ... and for one-off use "without prejudice"'. First and

foremost, [love] is eminently disposable' (Bauman, 2003: 12). Long-standing commitments, he argues, have been replaced by temporary connections and "'till death do us part" is decidedly out of fashion' (Bauman, 2003: 5). Instead, love is negotiated between partners and relationships that do not bring satisfaction may be exchanged, legitimately, for one that promises that it will (Bauman, 2003; Giddens, 1992). Conditionality, then, is a key feature of the modern relationship; love-for-now replaces love-for-ever and its status is always provisional, based on the performance of the other and their ability to meet our own needs. This may be 'emancipatory' for the individual, but it does not encourage the creation or maintenance of social bonds (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003). Moreover, removing 'duty' from love, Bauman (2000; 1990) claims, does not reduce one's obligation to others; rather, it dulls our inherent impulse to *accept* this obligation.

In stark contrast to the 'genuine love' proposed in the 'being-for-the-other' perspective, the 'individualisation of love' approach, then, proffers a view of love that is directed not to *all* others but to a few others. Whilst 'genuine' love is a brotherly love that 'loves its neighbour' – and its neighbour is all of humanity – modern love loves who it *chooses*. Likewise 'genuine' love flows to others regardless of their specific attributes because it comes from a capacity of the individual to love; conversely modern love is focused on the character of the other and is at the mercy of the ebb and flow of 'feeling' (Fromm, 1995). Modern love is particularised because it is associated with 'choice': individuals now have the choice of who to love, how to love and how to be loved and they are held accountable for the choices they make. In order to be certain that one's choices are 'correct', loving has thus become a continuous evaluation of one's own feelings and of the personalities of others. Similarly in order to make sure that one is 'chosen',

being loved has become, overwhelmingly, about making oneself 'lovable' (Illouz, 2012; Fromm, 1995;). The extent to which this picture of modern love wholly portrays love in contemporary society is questionable. There are, however, continuities between the research findings and the 'individualisation of love' approach: my research suggests, for example, that love has become particularised through a focus on 'choice' and an emphasis on 'feelings' – but that the sacrificial element of love indicates that people are not as self-focused as is proposed within the various theoretical articulations noted above. Love as a feeling directed towards particular others (whom we choose) was expressed most clearly through the conceptual categories of togetherness, closeness and prioritising the other and this discussion focuses upon these categories, though draws upon others when relevant.

Prioritising the Other

The respondents in this research all articulated a sacrificial element of love, which on first analysis undermines the claims of those within the 'individualisation of love' approach, who argue that love has become increasingly self-focused. Other-focused prioritising, however, involved placing the needs of one person above the needs of many others and over the needs of oneself. It is indicative of a trend towards the particularisation of love because it necessarily involves the act of choosing. This supports ideas contained within the individualisation-of-love frame because it points to a trend towards love being focused on a few particular individuals, rather than the group as primary social unit (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991) or humanity in general (Bauman, 2003; 2000; 1990; Fromm, 1995;). Nonetheless the presence of other-focused priority within loving relationships does challenge the idea that modern love is only

interested in satisfying the needs of the individual, because participants articulated desires to satisfy the needs of the beloved above their own comfort and satisfaction. This was especially true for people who were in relationships with dependents, but was experienced to some degree within all love relationships, including loving friendships.

Having said that, although participants spoke about a desire to prioritise the other – and to do so for the sake of the other – sacrificing was not always done unconditionally. Throughout discussions people implicitly indicated that in many relationships there was an expectation of reciprocity, primarily because without mutuality of feeling (and the expression of these feelings) individuals did not feel loved by the other party. Participants explained that a significant decrease in the frequency of loving behaviours may signal the beginning of the end of a romantic relationship or close friendship. Once an individual became aware of a lack of mutual feeling and/or reciprocal loving action decreased, they were much more likely to limit their own loving behaviour and their willingness to prioritise the other decreased over time. The behaviour of the other, then, was the condition upon which an individual decided whether, and how much, to continue investing in the relationship. This aspect of the love frame aligned with themes in the work of a number of theorists but notably within Giddens (1991; 1992), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Bauman's (2003) work. All of these authors propose that modern love is conditional, always based upon the performance of the other. Nonetheless, given the primacy of 'other-focused prioritising' in knowing and doing love within the love frame, it is suggested that the self-seeking attitude proposed in the 'individualisation of love' approach is somewhat overstated.

Together, Closeness and Choice

Throughout the research participants spoke about desires and expectations of experiencing 'togetherness' and 'closeness' with the people they love. The ways in which 'togetherness' and 'closeness' were conceptualised indicates that the current love frame particularises love, not necessarily in the actual act of being together or being close to someone, but rather through the inclusion of choice in to such matters; 'togetherness' and 'closeness', as they were described within this study, necessitate choosing and ordering hierarchically, those we come into contact with on a daily basis.

'Togetherness' was described by participants in two main ways: as a desire to spend time in co-presence with the beloved, and the experience of 'fusion' or unity between lovers. 'Togetherness', then, has both physical and emotional characteristics. Participants acknowledged that 'togetherness' was somewhat exclusive, primarily because life is busy and time and emotional energy were limited. It was recognised that available time had to be shared amongst the significant others in one's life; those who one loves are entitled to more of that time than those one likes or merely comes in to contact with. The 'burden' to spend more time with the beloved was not experienced as burdensome, however, rather a desire to spend time with one person instead of another was an indicator of one's loving feelings towards them. 'Togetherness' was also experienced as an emotional connection, something more than merely enjoying each other's company. This type of 'togetherness' was primarily associated with romantic love and described as two people 'being on the same side'. In order to be on someone's 'side' full self-disclosure was necessary; mutual and reciprocated authenticity was thus a prerequisite of emotional togetherness. Emotional connection was generated and maintained through in-depth knowledge of one another and more importantly,

given this knowledge there was an expectation of unconditional acceptance of the other. 'Togetherness', then, provided a safe haven within which to 'be oneself', though this varied according to relationship type.

The research indicated that expectations of emotional 'togetherness' were greater in relationships of choice than in relationships of circumstance. Participants also implied that there was a 'hierarchy' in relation to expectations about the degree of practical and emotional attention given to others. Partnership/romantic love was the relationship that demanded the most focused attention, required the strongest intensity of feeling and the greatest emotional investment. It also promised/provided the most potent emotional 'togetherness'. What was also demanded, however, was the adequate expression of such feelings. The demand to 'do' love, then, was greater in intimate relationships of choice than in relationships of circumstance, such as those within families. Such a demand seemed to conflict with the idea that love allowed individuals to 'be themselves' – because it also demands that you 'do' for the other. The research indicated, for example, that respectful, positive communication was an important part of doing love. This necessitated monitoring one's content, tone and timing of verbal communication, alongside managing the non-verbal cues needed to complement, rather than undermine, such communication. Such reflexive self-awareness, monitoring and self-regulation seems at odds with the concept of 'being oneself': it implies that love relationships proceed on the basis of 'be yourself as long as you conform to a set of behavioural expectations that I will hold you to account for'.

Moreover, competently performing 'love' was a condition of its maintenance and failing to perform it well had the potential to damage love. Being part of a loving relationship (of choice), then, always involves evaluation and

analysis of the other's behaviour. Participants suggested, for example, that significant changes in their partner's behaviour would or had caused them to question whether the relationship was worth pursuing, on the grounds that the existence of love itself was questioned. Participants also recalled occasions when love relationships had ended with the reasons given for the dissolution of a partnership often being associated with a failure to 'perform' love adequately. Conditionality, then, is built in to relationships of choice: entering into a relationship on the basis of 'personal choice' can always, presumably, be 'entered out of' in the same way. When *society* emphasises freedom and choice within relationships, the implications of not behaving 'appropriately' always include the possibility that relationships of choice become 'unchosen'.

Commentators have noted that this is what makes modern relationships so 'risky'. This research data, then, suggested that despite articulating an attitude of unconditional acceptance, the demand for competent performance of loving behaviours, alongside a willingness to dissolve a relationship when these behaviours were not being demonstrated, shows the conditional nature of modern relationships. With that in mind, however, participants did not speak flippantly about relationship termination especially because they were considered painful experiences. This would suggest that there *is* some conditionality associated with (romantic) love, but that relationships of choice are *not* as readily 'disposable' as some may claim (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003;).

Furthermore, those theorists who propose that love has become elective and conditional point to the increased riskiness of being in love relationships, but interestingly participants did not speak about experiencing love as 'risky' (Bauman, 2003; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991). There

were times when it was implied – especially within discussions about relationship cessation and the emotional hurt involved in their termination – and we could suggest that conditionality *always* involves a greater level of risk than relationships founded on ‘unconditionality’. Nonetheless the concept of ‘risk’ was not directly referred to within any research account and thus, it could be argued that authors theorising within the ‘individualisation of love’ perspective somewhat overstate this aspect of modern love. It is acknowledged that the lack of spontaneous discussion of risk within love relationships does not, however, mean that individuals do not experience it. It is possible that individuals are so used to experiencing and managing risk on a daily basis (Giddens, 1991) that awareness of risk is taken for granted and therefore remains unarticulated. Direct questioning on this could, therefore, be beneficial.

Interestingly ‘conditionality’ was not associated with family relationships in which there was a different type of expectation regarding the unconditional acceptance of the other. Family relationships were considered relationships of circumstance and participants explained that there was a certain amount of duty inherent within these relationships. This duty made unconditional acceptance of the other easier because it circumvented the need for continuous appraisal. Love within families, it was suggested, operates *despite* the behaviour of others not because of it. Participants described situations within which love could be inadequately or unequally performed by one party and yet the other party proceeds with the relationship because it was not considered optional. This was especially relevant when describing the love between parents and children (within which parents do more of the ‘work’ of love) and between siblings, when performance of love may be sporadic and in some cases ‘hypothetical’. Love

between siblings may not be 'performed' at all on a day-to-day basis; nonetheless love was presumed to exist because of an expectation that it *would* be performed *should* it become necessary. Family love was considered unconditional because it was associated with duty, even when the dutiful aspects of the relationship remained unfulfilled.

Alongside 'togetherness', the concept of 'closeness' was also an indicator of the particularity of love because it was associated with choice. It was suggested by participants that close physical proximity is desired by those who love one another and serves as a way of understanding and classifying one's own feelings; identifying who one feels a desire – and therefore chooses – to share physical space with, especially on a prolonged basis, often signified a greater intensity of feeling towards them. The more intense the (positive) feeling a person experiences, the more likely they were to classify that feeling as being 'love'. 'Closeness' was also, however, an important way in which to 'do' love. Physical closeness in the form of affectionate touch expressed loving feeling towards the beloved and it served as an indicator to others, observationally, that two people experienced a degree of loving feeling towards one another. Interestingly physical closeness was expected, observationally and experientially, to the greatest extent between romantic partners and parents and young children – but also within loving friendships. This suggested that physical closeness was not associated solely with *close* relationships of choice, but extended to the 'weaker' ties found within friendships and also family relationships of circumstance. Nonetheless, experiencing 'closeness' was not an expectation associated with merely being around others, primarily because it was seen as an act of will. One person in a relationship had to *decide* to initiate closeness through invitation or instigation,

whilst sharing space or receiving physical affection required the other individual to accept this invitation and allow this closeness to occur. Performing love was achieved through 'doing' closeness and this involved *choosing* others moment-by-moment and repeating this choice over time. Thus, whilst sharing space and being affectionate was more diffuse (or less particularised) than expectations/experiences of emotional *togetherness*, close physical proximity was a particularising activity because it discriminated continually between those who were loved and those who were not.

Knowledge and the Process of Choosing

Whilst choosing was the fundamental action that particularised love, knowledge provided the foundation for choice. Participants spoke about the necessity of *knowing* others before being able to love them. Knowledge of another person was described in such a way that suggested a causative connection between depth of knowledge and depth of feeling. When asked about people they did *not* love, for example, the primary reason given was that they were not 'known'. Sometimes this was straightforward in that there was or had been a total lack of interaction between people and thus they did not know one another. This was the case for two participants who grew up with absent fathers and one participant who discovered they had siblings when they were an adult. Despite having something of a relationship with these people now, these participants suggested that they *could* not describe their current feelings towards their fathers/siblings as 'love' because they did not know them well enough to do so. Absence of time spent together, then, led to an absence of loving feeling because all knowledge of the other was extremely limited.

Absence was not the only cause of a lack of knowledge. When speaking about wider family and also some friendships, participants suggested that although they 'know' extended family members and/or friends, they do not *know* them deeply enough to 'love' them; instead, having some (superficial) knowledge of people was associated with *liking* them. 'Liking', then, as a diluted version of love, has the potential to develop into 'loving' through deepening one's knowledge of the other. This can be achieved through increasing the number of occasions of togetherness – spending greater amounts of time in co-presence *can* deepen one's knowledge of the other – and this knowledge was, within the current love frame, a pre-requisite of loving the other.

Part I Conclusions

Neither of the theoretical approaches found within the literature adequately capture the love frame as described by participants within this research. The findings suggested instead, that the love frame combined aspects of both perspectives, such that 'love' was conceived of in much the same ways as within the 'being-for-the-other' approach, but contained similar ideas regarding the narrow and particularised ways in which this love is applied, as found within the literature that proposes love has become individualised. Love within the love frame was described as one which cares, respects and takes responsibility for the other and one that makes the beloved a priority in receiving attention and loving action.

It was also described as a 'personal' love – one which knows the other and loves on the basis of this knowledge. This was very much like the descriptions of

'genuine' love, with the crucial difference being the application of these behaviours to people. The 'being-for-the-other' approach argues that 'genuine' love is an attitude of responsibility for one's neighbour and who one's neighbour is, is a wide category. Bauman (1990), for example, argues that everyone we come into immediate co-presence with is our 'neighbour' and thus we are obligated to taking responsibility for them prior to any involvement with them. Likewise Fromm (1995) and Scheler (1973) argue that we are responsible for all others because they share a common humanity. Mutual co-responsibility between all persons is thus the emphasis within this approach. It was not the emphasis within the research accounts, however. Rather, the concept of choice underpinned many loving relationships. Moreover whether the relationship was chosen was one way in which individuals evaluated the value of their relationships. Because partnership relationships were considered the pinnacle of 'choice' with regards to love, they were considered very valuable and intense feelings of love were associated with this type of relationship. A similar sentiment existed with regards to friendships. In a sense, 'choosing' someone set them apart from relationships of circumstance (within families for example) and this bestowed value on them. The exception to this appeared to be relationships with one's own children, who were valued on an equal par with partners, though expectations of how the relationships would look were different.

From the research findings in this project it could not be argued that the love frame involves a love for one's neighbour. The data within this project indicated that we are more likely to love our partners, like our friends and remain ambivalent – at best – to our neighbours. According to much of the literature this remains a problem for the construction of social solidarity, because exclusive love

fails to generate widespread bonds between people who share a community or a society, but have no interpersonal relationship outside of chance encounters (Fromm, 1995; Bauman, 2003). Part II of this chapter proposes that there are, however, alternative ways to conceptualise the relationship between love, morality and solidarity by reconsidering Scheler's work on mutual co-responsibility through Goffman's analyses of interaction and frames.

Part II: Moral dimensions of the love frame

In light of the emphasis that some theorists have placed on the moral potential that love has, this thesis argues that *if* loving one's neighbour is necessary for the maintenance of 'true' solidarity (Scheler, 1973) then society is not currently experiencing 'true' solidarity because it does not love its neighbour, at least not in the ways proposed in the theoretical literature (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973). As noted in Part I, there was much overlap between ways of doing love according to this research and the ways that Fromm and Bauman propose that it 'ought' to be done, but also significant difference regarding who one ought to love and why. Within the literature the concept of 'neighbour' is a broad one such that 'neighbourly' love is a universal 'brotherly' love for all people. This type of love is considered to be important because it generates social bonds (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973).

The command to 'love one's neighbour as oneself' is, according to the sociological literature, a call to accept the obligation of mutual co-responsibility and is necessary for social life (Bauman, 2000; 1990; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973). When a social unit is built upon this mutual co-responsibility 'true' social solidarity is created and maintained (Scheler, 1973). For Scheler, Fromm and Bauman,

however, mutual co-responsibility does not characterise love or social relationships within modern society. Instead, love is limited to a few others and self-responsibility is the focus within capitalist society. Social solidarity is thus undermined and only ever 'achieved' by 'fiction and force' (Scheler, 1973) through a 'majority consensus' that is forced upon the minority (Scheler, 1973) and through 'conformity' to a majority position (Fromm, 1995). Unity, and therefore solidarity, between persons is therefore considered an illusion within a capitalist social system.

Goffman's work takes a different stance towards 'solidarity' and 'morality', however, and he emphasises the ways in which interaction creates and maintains, or conversely destroys and undermines, social bonds between people. This section of the chapter explores Goffman's views of morality and solidarity by examining his work on the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1983; 1972), particularly the ways in which 'rules of conduct' can contribute to the maintenance of selves (Rawls, 1987) and to social order (Miztal, 2001). It is also argued that Goffman's (1972) concepts of deference and demeanour can be used to reconceptualise Scheler's (1973) ideas of mutual co-responsibility as something that is done in and through interaction. This section of the chapter then concludes by applying this understanding to the 'love frame' and exploring the extent to which the love frame contains 'rules of conduct' that, when followed, show deference to others. This, it is argued, provides an alternative way to consider the potential morality of love.

Although it is not explained again in detail, this part of the chapter draws on the analysis of social frames as having a moral dimension (as examined in chapter three), as the moral context within which interactional rules operate. By way of a reminder, social frames contain rules that govern how an individual ought to

behave in a given situation and these rules become criteria for individual evaluation. Framing conventions enable individuals to accurately define situations and 'frame rules' guide their subsequent behaviour accordingly. One's involvement within any (social) situation, then, is not decided in the moment by the individual; rather individuals enter into a situation already defined for them and their actions are governed by rules already in operation. When an individual follows the rules of the frame they can be said to be acting morally, because they are maintaining the order of the frame they are operating within by behaving in socially appropriate ways. This aspect of Goffman's work has been developed within Misztal's (2001) theorising on 'normality' and this thesis draws on her analyses in this regard.

Interaction as a Moral Action in Goffman's Work

Rawls (1987) argues that Goffman's theory of the 'interaction order' emphasises the ways in which social life is built around the protection of the 'presented self'. She believes that it is this aspect of Goffman's (1972) work that conveys his views on morality, especially regarding the care given to people within interactions. When individuals show interactional 'deference' to others and when they behave in ways to strengthen (or at least not undermine) the 'self' being presented by others, they are forming and/or maintaining a social bond and thus in practical ways, the outcomes of interaction are foundational for social solidarity (Rawls, 1987; Goffman, 1967).

Goffman's (1972; 1969) concept of 'self' proposes that individuals construct and maintain a 'front' that is upheld by others within social interaction, such that one's sense of self is a collaborative effort; an achievement generated in and through interaction (Rawls, 1987). The 'presentation of self' is dependent upon

one's competent performance of that self and upon it being received and accepted as valid by others (Goffman, 1969). In order for selves to be maintained in this way there must be a shared set of expectations or interactional 'ground rules' that guide behaviours in this regard; an individual must know how to present himself competently in accordance with the norms and values of the social group, whilst others around them must know how to communicate acceptance of the presentation in a way that is meaningful to the 'presenter' and to others witnessing the presentation.

Goffman refers to the area of social life containing this set of interactional ground rules the 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1983a; 1972) and for him, this order has a ritualised nature – not necessarily in the routinisation of interaction (though this may be a part of it), but in the ways in which selves are treated as 'sacred' such that interaction is a 'ritual' performed towards others, as a mechanism of protecting and maintaining the social selves of those we come into contact with. This is not dissimilar to Bauman's (2003) views regarding the role of attentive listening and communication in conveying to others that they are valuable. For Rawls (1987: 137), then, it is the 'interaction order' that places a *moral* constraint on social life: 'the fact that persons must commit themselves to the ground rules of interaction in order for selves to be maintained is treated by Goffman as a moral, not a structural imperative'. She argues that the ritual nature of the interaction order acts as a constraint on the social order and supplies intrinsic motivation for an individual's compliance to social rules.

Elsewhere, however, other theorists have emphasised the ways in which the interaction order is a *structural* imperative (Miztal, 2001). Miztal (2001) suggests that the interaction order is one of the stabilising mechanisms (alongside

'stigma' and 'frames') that generates a sense of 'normality' in social life and thus contributes to social order. She proposes that social life is contingent and uncertain but is treated by actors as if it is 'predictable, reliable and legible' (Miztal, 2001). This is possible, Miztal claims, because of the production of social 'trust' that enables individuals to trust that life will proceed as 'normal'. Trust is therefore a functional necessity but one that is an (unintended) outcome of 'situational normality' (Miztal, 2001). Normality is not something that arises spontaneously, however, instead it is something that is constructed and maintained by the interaction order and through 'frames'. In this way, then, the interaction order (amongst other mechanisms) places a *structural* constraint on social life.

This thesis proposes, however, that it is not necessary to classify Goffman's work on interaction as *either* a moral *or* a structural imperative. Rather, it is possible to see that the ground rules of the interaction order can be adhered to and performed as both a ritual – that is, persons are treated as sacred through them – *and* as a routine, that constructs a sense of normality through the existence of rules that generate a 'working consensus' between people. This working consensus creates a sense of normality from which 'trust' is an outcome and where there is trust, normality and a working consensus there is social order. Whilst one could argue that the maintenance of social order is predominantly a structural imperative, it could equally be argued that acting in accordance with the working consensus so that social life is not disrupted is also a moral imperative. Therefore, Rawls' suggestion that the interaction order is moral because it creates and maintains the social self does not, then, preclude its use/action as a mechanism of consistency, necessary for the routinisation of social order. Rather, adherence to

the rules of the interaction order, as a contribution to the maintenance of social order, may be as moral as contributing to the protection and maintenance of individual selves. It is not one or the other, then, but both.

It is also the argument of this work that Goffman's (1972) analysis of interaction, specifically his work on 'deference' and 'demeanour', proffers similar ideas to Scheler's regarding the necessity of mutual co-responsibility for the maintenance of social bonds in particular and social life more broadly. Goffman (1972: 47) proposes that 'the person in our urban secular world is allotted a kind of sacredness that is displayed and confirmed by symbolic acts'. Goffman labels the acts by which we convey this sacredness 'deference' and 'demeanour'. Giving 'deference' to somebody refers to the aspect of an activity that conveys appreciation '*to a recipient of this recipient*' (Goffman, 1972: 56 emphasis in original). Goffman refers to these actions as 'marks of devotion' because through giving someone deference we are treating the individual as something sacred and worthy of ritual action (Goffman, 1972: 56).

Conversely, 'demeanour' regards one's presentation of oneself as being a particular type of person. It is a claims-making action about oneself. What an individual claims through their demeanour is important prior to and during interaction. Firstly because other interactants use it to make judgements about how the interaction should proceed, and also about whether the individual can be relied upon to maintain themselves appropriately within the interaction. Secondly, individuals are held accountable for the claims that they make and therefore one's demeanour is not just important for others as a tool of judgement: failure to present oneself, in the manner in which was proposed through one's demeanour, can have negative consequences. This may occur when someone knowingly

misrepresents themselves, or when someone errs and makes a claim about themselves that they are unable to maintain. The consequence for the individual can include feelings of shame and humiliation, or could result in more formal sanctions – an extreme example of which may be institutionalisation (Goffman, 1972; 1961)

Which acts constitute proper deference and demeanour is not, however, static and fixed but variable according to time and place. Nonetheless Goffman (1972) suggests that there *are* always ‘rules of conduct’ that govern what these symbolic acts of deference and demeanour are, and how and when they must be performed. In daily life these rules regarding deference and demeanour impinge on individuals in two ways. Firstly, as obligations about how one must conduct themselves towards others, and secondly as expectations about how others ought to conduct themselves towards you. Goffman argues that compliancy to these rules is recommended not because they are ‘pleasant, cheap, or effective’ but because they are ‘just’ (Goffman, 1967: 48); the rules of interaction therefore have a moral dimension.

At any given time individuals are subject to interactional rules governing both deference and demeanour because they must simultaneously manage the impression they are giving of themselves (their demeanour) and give appropriate deference to others. This is a complex set of actions because it is not merely ‘responsive’: that is, the deference we give to another interactant is not solely based on the demeanour image that they give of themselves. Rather it is a combination of the other’s demeanour image (who they claim to be), alongside one’s own demeanour image (who I claim to be) and then locating this in the particular context or ‘frame’ of understanding the interactants finds themselves in

– the latter of which may change the nature of the relationship between interactants at different times. It is possible, then, to distinguish between ‘interactional rules’ and ‘frame rules’ that are distinct from one another, though always interconnected; the individual is always subject, simultaneously, to both. When taken altogether ‘interactional’ rules and ‘frame’ rules can be said to form ‘involvement obligations’ which govern how an individual should behave at any given time or place.

At various points in Western culture, for example, (interactional) rules of conduct have governed how men should behave in the presence of women. One ‘rule’ has been that when a woman enters a room within which a man is sitting, he stands up upon her entrance as a sign of deference to her. This changes, however, depending upon the woman’s demeanour image that she gives of herself. This may be because aspects of her body limit the claims she can make about herself: her age, for example. It may also be impacted upon by aspects over which she has no control, i.e. statuses that are codified in culture. This might include indicators of class position, or differentially valued occupations. The application of the ‘rule’ ‘to stand’ may also be inappropriate depending on the man’s demeanour image he gives of himself. He is likely to be subject to the same variability regarding the claims he is able to make about himself, even if there are gendered differences in this respect.

Finally, some contexts and situations – frame rules – overrule other (interactional) rules and so where one may ordinarily give deference to someone else, there are times when this would be inappropriate. It may be proper, for example, for Henry to stand up as a sign of deference to Jane when she approaches the table of the restaurant where he is already seated. If, however, the next time

Henry and Jane meet they in a courtroom where Henry is the judge and Jane is a court official it would be pertinent for *her* to stand upon his entrance as a sign of deference to him due to the varying status' associated with their different occupations.

The rules associated with deference and demeanour, alongside those associated with different frames, are therefore complex and variable. They are also moral because giving deference to others and managing one's own demeanour are, for Goffman, the ways in which 'selves' are 'manufactured' and maintained (Goffman, 1972; Goffman, 1969: 252). Giving someone their 'proper' deference is a moral act because it conveys to the other that they are important. Likewise, making 'genuine' claims about oneself through one's demeanour is also a moral imperative because it is just as significant to the proceeding interaction (Goffman, 1972).

This thesis argues that there are similarities between Goffman's analysis of deference and demeanour and Scheler's (1973) views regarding mutual co-responsibility. Goffman (1972: 49) proposes that the rules governing deference and demeanour have an 'interpersonal, actor-recipient character'. There is therefore a mutual co-responsibility within Goffman's analysis of interaction, primarily associated with compliancy to interactional rules; for Goffman (1972: 49) 'what is one man's obligation will often be another's expectation'. Moreover, Goffman maintains that *when* an individual becomes involved in the maintenance of a rule (i.e. when they follow it) they become committed to a particular image of themselves – primarily an image of themselves as someone who follows a particular rule or set of rules. Others rely on this image within their present and future interactions with this individual (and other individuals like them).

Presenting oneself in a particular way, then, through rule following (or not), becomes a commitment and is thus experienced as an obligation to both oneself and to others.

At the same time this individual is also reliant upon others: firstly in accepting the image that is being presented and secondly in upholding the same rules which they themselves are subject to. These rules of conduct do not, therefore, exist as an individual obligation, but instead are mutual obligations in which individuals are simultaneously responsible for themselves and for others on an ongoing basis. Goffman (1972: 84-85) tells us that

‘Each individual is responsible for the demeanour image of himself and the deference image of others, so that for a complete man to be expressed, individuals must hold hands in a chain of ceremony, each giving deferentially with proper demeanour to the one on the right what will be received deferentially from the one on the left’.

This ‘chain of ceremony’, it is argued, expresses a similar sentiment to Scheler’s (1973) work on mutual co-responsibility. All individuals are responsible for both themselves and for others: as ‘individual persons’, to use Scheler’s (1973) description, or ‘selves’ to use Goffman’s (1972).

There is, however, an additional dimension to Scheler’s work beyond having a responsibility to others as individuals, and that is responsibility to both self and others as part of the ‘collective person’. We can see this aspect of shared responsibility in Goffman’s work through his analysis of interaction as it relates to the maintenance of social order, alongside his theorising regarding the morality inherent within social frames. Utilising Misztal’s (2001) work, it can be argued that adhering to the rules of conduct associated with the interaction order, that are

relevant according to the situational 'frame'²⁵, is the way in which individuals contribute to the maintenance of the social order. When rules are upheld by being followed, individuals can be seen as fulfilling their obligations to others within the interaction and also their obligations to the shared social order through their acceptance and maintenance of the working consensus (Miztal, 2001).

In the ways outlined above, then, social interaction in general can be seen as fulfilling certain aspects of the command to 'love one's neighbour' through the symbolic actions of deference and demeanour. Adherence to the rules of interaction – as a way of upholding an individual's presented self as valid – can be seen as an act of caring for the other; when someone does this they are accepting their obligation to take responsibility for their role in the 'chain of ceremony' necessary for 'a complete man to be expressed' (Goffman, 1972: 84). Similarly, contributing to the maintenance of social order can demonstrate a commitment to the orderliness of the shared social space one finds themselves in and can therefore be seen as a fulfilling a moral duty.

Loving Interaction as a Moral Action in the 'Love Frame'

Interactional scenes only contribute to social order to the degree to which participants are committed to fulfilling their 'involvement obligations'²⁶ (Miztal, 2001; Rawls, 1987; Goffman, 1972) and an action can be considered moral to the degree to which it shows 'proper', that is appropriate, deference to other interactants. Both the deferential rules of conduct and involvement obligations are specified by both the interaction order in general and by the frame in particular. Exploring the rules of conduct and the involvement obligations of a particular

²⁵ Which are then 'policed' through application of stigma and negative sanctions (Miztal, 2001).

²⁶ The combination of the interactional rules and the frame rules in any given situation.

frame, alongside exploring the degree to which individuals are committed to fulfilling these rules and obligations can, then, indicate the extent to which the frame itself is a moral one i.e. does it contain specific rules that show symbolic deference to others. Exploring whether individuals in a given social setting or group are committed to the moral aspects of the frame can also tell us something about the moral behaviour of individuals or groups of individuals.

This section explores the extent to which love (as it was described within this research) can be considered a moral action by exploring whether: deference was a feature of the love frame; and whether individuals felt committed to fulfilling their involvement obligations in this regard. It is argued that the descriptions of the love frame indicate that it does contain a moral dimension, because 'loving' involves showing 'special' symbolic deference to others. It is also argued that people within the research were committed to these moral aspects of the love frame, but that the extent to which people in general are committed to them cannot be ascertained without further empirical work.

Despite these findings, however, it is suggested that although mutual co-responsibility characterised the descriptions of love relationships within this research, it was not the basis from which participants dealt with strangers or people that they did not love. Rather, the awareness of an obligation to treat others in the ways described in this research was used as an indicator of one's feelings about them. Desiring to demonstrate loving behaviour was used as a tool of assessment of the status of one's feelings about another. On this basis, then, it is proposed that looking at how we treat those we love is not a good enough indicator of the morality or social solidarity of a group. Instead, it is suggested that there needs to be work which examines the obligations we feel towards 'strangers'. This

information, when analysed in comparison to the love frame, may provide a fruitful analysis regarding the extent to which we 'love our neighbours'.

When taken altogether the findings described in the previous chapters indicated that the love frame contains a moral dimension. In particular the concepts of 'positive communication', 'knowledge' and 'prioritising the other' demonstrated that within one's life certain people are the focus of a 'special' kind of deference; one that is used to 'set them apart' from others around them and classify them as 'loved'. These special acts of deference were linked to the wider concept of 'care', though were distinct from 'care' as a category because they demonstrated a symbolic care for the other, rather than a physical, or even emotional, care for them.

Firstly, 'positive communication' was described as a means of conveying value to others and also as a form of caring for them, interactionally. Many participants spoke about the need for 'positive communication' within *all* interactions but this was of especial importance in love relationships. This was because positive communication – involving respectful speech, attentive listening, prolonged eye contact, smiling at others and affectionate gesturing – was considered a way of revealing to someone that they are considered valuable. Within the research accounts people spoke about people they loved as being more valuable to them than people they merely liked, knew or came across. The burden for positive communication was therefore greater within these relationships, primarily because individuals wanted to convey this positive assessment to the beloved and to others around them.

There was also awareness that positive communication was important because it demonstrates a special kind of interactional care for others. This was

similar to the ways in which Goffman (1972) describes the moral dimension of 'deference'. Participants spoke about 'communication' (or interaction) as a mechanism by which people could be cared for, or conversely could be hurt by. Because there was an expectation that one is emotionally invested in the lives of those one loves, there was also an expectation that one's behaviour would not cause emotional upset to the beloved, but would instead seek to care for and protect the other's feelings. This was relevant within people's expectations regarding their own behaviours within interaction, but also regarding the behaviours of others – both interactionally and observationally. When asked what they would expect to see between two people who loved one another, many respondents focused on positive communication within interaction as a means of assessing feelings between people.

Secondly, 'knowledge' was similarly described as a way of demonstrating one's value judgements of others, alongside demonstrating care to them. Within the sociological literature individualised and particularised love – that is, feelings of love that are focused on certain individuals in response to who the person is – is considered less moral than a universalised love because it is conditional upon the character traits of the other and our knowledge of those traits (Illouz, 2012; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995). Conditionality is thought to undermine our awareness of the obligations we have towards others and becomes a barrier to accepting the responsibility we have for the well-being of the other (Bauman, 2003; 2000). The literature thus treats 'knowledge' and 'conditionality' as means by which other people are evaluated, and then accepted or rejected on this basis. The research findings of this project suggested, however, that knowledge was not used solely as a way to 'assess' the other, even when it was associated with

demonstrating value judgements that had been made. Rather, 'knowledge-filled caring' – the appropriate demonstration of relevant knowledge about the other in order to care for them – was considered a valuable aspect of love because it displayed commitment and devotion from the lover towards the beloved.

In-depth knowledge of the other was therefore considered a pre-requisite of care because *relevant* and therefore personalised care demonstrated an attitude of commitment to the other, not because it was used as a means of evaluating the person and whether they were deserving of care. It was agreed between participants that care *can* be motivated by other sentiments apart from love, but that loving care was motivated by an investment in the well-being of the other. Acts of care, underpinned by knowledge, demonstrated this investment and were therefore experienced as acts of commitment and recommitment to the other. When participants engaged in this type of 'caring' it was a signal to the beloved that they were *loved* and in some way 'set apart' from others around them through this love. Likewise, 'prioritising the other' was used as a similar sign of affective value and being prioritised was interpreted as an indication of one's status to the lover. Both 'knowledge' and 'prioritising', then, can be seen as attitudes of 'deference' to the other that treat the beloved in a 'sacred' way, setting them apart from others around them through ritual actions of 'personalised' and 'prioritised' care. In contrast to the claims of the literature, then, particularised love may have a greater moral dimension than universalised love because it displays a special kind of defence to others and treats them as being uniquely valuable.

In the research accounts there were no set behaviours that *automatically* demonstrated a special deferential attitude towards others. Instead, these were negotiated between people and it was this relational aspect of action that gave

certain behaviours the power to bestow value to others and to demonstrate care for them. Some examples of actions that demonstrated a special deferential attitude were hand-holding, making a cup of tea without being asked, knowing preferences and acting on the basis of these preferences, thoughtful gift-buying, affectionate communication, and sexual intimacy. This list is not exhaustive, nor did it apply to every relationship. Moreover, with the exception of sexual intimacy, these were not necessarily actions that held any 'special' meaning on their own, nor were they behaviours that were only reserved for people who were loved; individuals would certainly expect to make cups of tea for other people whom they did not love. What transformed these actions from 'standard' actions to 'special' actions was the attitude with which they were done. Attitudes were discerned through the appropriate application of knowledge and through interactional gestures, primarily physical contact. On this basis, then, we could say that (interactional) 'closeness' was also associated with the special deferential action of love.

All of these aspects of the 'love frame' indicate that loving involved performing special deferential acts to others as a means of bestowing value to them. To the people performing these actions they were not merely 'standard doings' done for 'standard reasons' (Goffman, 1981) but 'standard doings' done for 'exceptional' reasons: an important function of these acts was to 'set apart' some people from others and communicate to them that they had a different status, one which involved 'love' rather than merely 'liking' or 'affection'. In this respect these actions had a moral dimension because they were performed as part of a 'ritual' towards others, as a means of communicating love to them. Whilst the sociological literature claims that modern 'love' fails to draw out 'genuine' love's moral

potential because it does not exist 'for the other', this research and analysis argues that modern love *does* have a moral dimension. Love shows special 'appreciation to a recipient of this recipient' above and beyond the deference we show to general others within routine interaction (Goffman, 1972: 56); it pays 'special deference' to loved others as a way of bestowing value.

It has been noted that an action is only moral *if* individuals fulfil the 'involvement obligations' associated with that particular action or situation. That is, an action may have a moral 'potential' that is only realised when individuals adequately 'play their part' in it. So whilst this research may demonstrate that a 'love frame' has a moral potential because it contains rules of conduct that show a special kind of deference to others, this potential may not be realised if individuals fail to engage in the behaviours that express this deference. The involvement obligations for love are those aspects of a relationship that must be done in order for someone to feel loved by others. The involvement obligations ascertained within this research were the categories outlined in chapter five. As noted within that chapter, not all behaviours were required all the time and within every relationship. Nonetheless, these were the aspects of the love frame that must, to some degree, be performed/experienced in order for an individual to say that 'love is going on here'. When an individual initially performs these behaviours they do so in order to communicate love to others. Utilising Goffman's theorising, it could be argued that once this has been done they become obligated to *continue* communicating love in these ways and at this point actions done initially to express feeling, become involvement obligations. As long as there is an expectation about how love will be 'done' within a relationship, doing it this way becomes not

just a functional necessity – used to communicate feeling – but a moral one too – used to convey value and status and maintain the ‘working consensus’.

Goffman (1972) argues that a person may meet an obligation without feeling that it is an obligation. This was generally the case within the loving relationships described within this research, particularly relationships of choice. Goffman also argues, however, that sometimes an obligation is felt as an ‘ought’ and when this is the case it may be felt as a ‘desired thing or as an onerous one’ (Goffman, 1972: 50). The participants in this study reported that the desire to enact love was not always present, particularly in relationships of circumstance, indicating that sometimes fulfilling one’s involvement obligations *was* experienced as an obligation. Within family relationships especially, participants communicated that sometimes they behaved in a loving way because they felt they *ought* to, not because they necessarily wanted to in that moment.

Much of the time love *was* performed for love’s sake, as an expression of genuine feeling. At other times, however, it was performed as an end in itself, though always with the maintenance of the relationship in mind. This suggests that even when an involvement obligation was experienced as an obligation, it was done so as a ‘desired thing’ not an onerous one. Further evidence to support this idea is the existence of the category ‘prioritising the other’. This category was associated with sacrifice and burden but was most often described (and experienced) in a positive way. Moreover, there was a sense in which ‘prioritising the other’ was only relevant within *love* relationships, such that it was a special act of deference used to ‘set apart’ loved others from those that are liked, known or encountered. This suggests that even the most burdensome aspects of relationships can be desired when they are associated with love.

Although there was no direct questioning on this aspect of the love frame, the research accounts suggest that the individuals participating within this study *were* committed to fulfilling their involvement obligations within their love relationships. This was because doing so was described as being an important aspect of relationship maintenance. Failing to fulfil one's obligations was described almost as a 'dereliction of duty' and was felt to communicate to the beloved that they were no longer important. A few participants, for example, described occasions where they had been recipients of someone failing to fulfil their loving involvement obligations. This had led to feelings of doubt regarding how valued they were to the other person, and about the status and trajectory of the relationship. In all the cases within the research, a persistent failure to fulfil loving involvement obligations had marked the 'beginning of the end' of the love relationship and had caused hurt to the injured party. It appeared then that involvement obligations were experienced as both functional necessities and as moral imperatives necessary for the adequate care of the other. These research participants appeared committed to fulfilling their commitments regarding the obligations associated with loving, but ascertaining whether this is the case for love in general, in all groups within the population is a matter for further empirical research.

Part II Conclusions

If the sociological literature on love and morality are to be believed the stakes are high when it comes to love. If love is universally other-orientated and takes responsibility for the well-being of the other then it has the potential to generate social solidarity by creating and maintaining social bonds. Unfortunately, various

theorists contend, modern love is not universally other-orientated and it does not take responsibility for the other's well-being. Instead it is particularised and self-focused. Modern love, then, does not appear to fulfil its moral potential. This thesis wanted to explore alternative ways to conceptualise morality, especially the connections between love and morality, in order to interrogate the position found in the literature.

Utilising Goffman's work on the ways in which morality is played out within interaction, this part of the chapter explored whether there is a different kind of morality to the one proposed in the literature that is expressed in the precept to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. The research findings suggested that love is not one which loves its neighbour and so it could be argued that modern love has no moral dimension. Nonetheless, using Goffman's work on deference and demeanour, alongside his analyses of the interaction order and frames, it is possible to view love as having a moral dimension because it treats the beloved as sacred. Goffman's (1972) work on interaction suggests that this is a process that is common to almost all interactional encounters. It has been argued here that this process is concentrated within love relationships, such that loving involves acting in a way that sets the beloved apart from those around them. In this respect, then, love is an intensification of the social action of bestowing value, communicating worth and building up the self that is typical of the 'interaction order'. It was also suggested that by meeting the expectations of the beloved, an individual is fulfilling one's obligations within their love relationships. This contributes to the ongoing 'working consensuses' of 'lives lived together' and is thus a moral endeavour as well as a stabilising one.

Conceptualising morality in this way, then, ‘rescues’ love from the sociological literature by proposing a way in which a non-universalised love can be considered moral. It is important to note, however, that much of the fundamental ‘doings’ of the love described within this research, were done to express distinctions made between loved and non-loved others. The bestowing of value onto *particular* individuals was a feature of the love described by participants, and in light of the warnings proposed within existing theory regarding the dangers of a particularised and individualised understanding of love, it would be unwise to propose that the existing love frame is as moral as it *could* be. Moreover, because discussions of love within the research were focused on individual love relationships it is not possible to establish whether, or the extent to which, people are committed to fulfilling the involvement obligations associated with love. This is, instead, a matter for further empirical study which could seek to study ‘compliance’ to the love frame within relationships. It would be interesting to explore whether people described what they actually do within relationships, or whether participants discussed what they felt they *ought* to do. However helpful future research developments may be, however, the findings of this research are helpful in challenging existing literature by rethinking the concepts of and connections between love and morality and how it is enacted within social and loving relationships.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter began with a comparison of the research findings and the theoretical literature on love. It was argued that neither of the theoretical perspectives regarding love adequately captures the love frame as described within this

research. Whilst there was much overlap between theory and the research findings, there were also, however, discontinuities. Differences between both theoretical positions and between theory and data primarily stemmed from a divergence in views regarding what love 'is'. Those theorists who view love as diffuse and generalised suggest that love is a *capacity* of the individual and it is not, therefore, conditional upon the characteristics of the beneficiary. Within this perspective love relationships are an intensified version of social relationships; the specific expressions of love may be different within different relationships, but the orientation towards others is the same within intimate relationships as it is within social relationships. Love is thus considered to be the basis of social bonds and social solidarity.

Alternatively, both the love frame and the literature within the 'individualisation-of-love' perspective propose that love is a *feeling* that is brought about in *response* to the personalities of particular people. Within this conceptualisation of love, then, love relationships are elective and conditional. Because 'choice' is inherent within these relationships there are few connections made within the literature, or within the research findings, between love relationships, social relationships and social solidarity. In fact within the research findings expressions of love functioned to 'set apart' particular individuals from those around them; as the recipient of love an individual is given a different status to generalised others and this was considered the defining and, importantly, valuable aspect of being loved.

How a society conceptualises love is considered important because the way in which a society defines what love is and how it should be done is considered to be an indicator of the moral priorities of that society (Bauman, 2003; Fromm,

1995). This is because social life necessitates relationships with others, and relationships always contain obligations to others. Bauman (1990), Fromm (1995) and Scheler (1973) all argue that all people are fundamentally responsible for the well-being of individual others and for the well-being of the group as a whole. This responsibility is not dependent on who the other is or what they are like; rather it exists as a responsibility by virtue of a shared humanity. The theorists within the 'being-for-the-other' perspective argue that this obligation and responsibility to others is best articulated by the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Bauman, 2003; 1990; Fromm, 1995; Scheler, 1973).

These same authors argue that the problem with modern love is that the obligations we have for others is undermined by the concept of choice, which is a meta-value within a capitalist society (Bauman, 2008). They propose that other-oriented 'genuine' love is moral, but that an individualised and particularised love – the type of love that exists within modern capitalist society – lacks a moral dimension because it fails to accept responsibility for others or fulfil the moral and social obligations that living with others requires. Although there is much sociological literature that does not make this connection between love and morality (Luhmann, 2012; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992; 1991), the descriptions of modern love are largely the same within both the 'being-for-the-other' and the 'individualisation-of-love' approaches. There is little disagreement, then, about whether love in modern society is individualised and particularised; the primary difference between the literatures in this regard is what the consequences of love conceived of in this way might be.

The research findings propose, however, that even though choice and conditionality are features of modern love relationships, obligations to others are

fulfilled daily, within social relationships in general and within love relationships in particular. Part II of this chapter explored the ways in which obligations operate within love relationships and how they are fulfilled through loving interactions. Goffman's work on interaction and frames was appealed to as an alternative understanding of the ways in which morality is played out in daily life. The sphere of interaction was described as a sphere which is governed by rules of conduct and, in line with Goffman's (1983a; 1972) theorising, it was suggested that to orientate oneself to the rules is a moral disposition and not merely a structural one. Moreover, it was also proposed that rules that are followed simply to maintain social order also have a moral dimension because they contribute to a sense of 'normality', an outcome of which is 'social trust' and something which is a necessary requisite for social stability and solidarity (Misztal, 2001).

Loving interactions, then, were considered to be governed by both the general rules of the interaction order and by the particular rules of the 'love frame'. It was argued that the proper objects of 'love' in contemporary UK society are close relationships of circumstance and to relationships of choice. This 'narrowness' regarding who ought to be loved undermines the potential provision of social solidarity based on a generalised love for others. Nonetheless the behaviours of love associated with the love frame did promote 'solidarity' between people on a smaller scale, i.e. within families or couple relationships and so on that basis modern love ought not to be considered a wholly amoral action. Instead what we think of as being 'moral action' needs to be reconsidered. The following chapter concludes this thesis and discusses whether, in light of these discussions, love is as moral as it could or ought to be, and if not how we might begin to change it.

Conclusion

This thesis began by asking why and how love matters to sociology? Three claims have been made within the literature regarding the sociological importance of love: firstly, sociology argues that love matters to individuals and affects every day practices and motivates action in the private sphere (Illouz, 2012; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Weber, 1991). Understanding the effects of love on various aspects of life – areas such as decision-making, allocation of resources, use of time – are part of comprehending a full picture of an individual's world and what drives their social action. Secondly, it is claimed that love is the modern way in which many close ties are constructed and intimate 'communities' are formed. The creation of networks of support, it is argued, has become the responsibility of the individual; love is the modern person's tool of network creation because it has the capacity to build bonds (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). There is also a claim that love has a much greater value than merely enriching the lives of people as individuals and also their lives experienced together in small groups. Love, it is argued, has a *moral* potential to generate wider scale social bonds and is the 'proper' foundation for social solidarity (Kaufmann, 2011; Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995; Simmel, 1984).

Theoretical interest in love has not been equal between social theorists, however, and ideas about the ways in which love impacts on social life has been differentially developed by different writers. This thesis has focused on the work of a few theorists – namely Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), Giddens (1992; 1991), Bauman (2003), Fromm (1995) and Scheler (1973) – who have sought to explore these issues in greater depth. Focusing on their work is not a claim that theirs are

the only valuable contributions to the discussion merely that they contribute much more to this topic than other theorists. Whilst this project began by explicating the sociological literature on love, it did not stop at this point. Rather, through an initial focus on existing literature, it became apparent that much of the theorising lacked empirical confirmation. Empirical data, then, was considered vital for interrogating the claims made about love within social theory.

Goffman's concept of 'frame' as found within his book *Frame Analysis* provided the theoretical framework for empirical enquiry. Despite describing Goffman's ideas regarding frames, and the usefulness of the concept for sociology, his text does not, however, provide guidance about how one should *do* a frame analysis and so deciding how to proceed with data generation within this project was a challenge; chapter four detailed this research process. Research findings were presented in chapter five by describing seven analytical categories that organised experiences of love and constituted the 'love frame'. These findings presented a number of ways in which love was described as being important in the lives of the participants, documenting the impact love had on personal decision-making and daily living. Chapter six developed these categories through a discussion of the wider implications they may have outside of the immediate sphere of personal relationships. Avenues of applicability to areas of disciplinary interest outside of sociology were also noted and future research developments were proposed. The findings presented in chapters five and six illustrated that the first and second claims regarding love's theoretical importance within sociology can be supported by empirical data.

The final claim regarding love's potential morality was described both at the beginning and at the end of the thesis, alongside an examination of the barriers

that limit the possibility of this potential being realised, namely modern capitalist society. The central proposition of this claim is that the potential morality of love can be described best by the Judeo-Christian precept of 'loving one's neighbour as oneself'. This command is moral, it is argued, because it takes responsibility for the self, the other and the group; Scheler (1973) refers to this social orientation as one of mutual co-responsibility. It is this state of mutual co-responsibility, he argues, that produces a social solidarity where each member of the group is valued as a unique and irreplaceable member.

Theorists who subscribe to this view of love also propose that it is not the type of love that exists within modern society and on this point the literature and the research findings are congruent. It is also claimed, however, that modern love is not moral on this basis and it is this latter claim that the results of the research could not wholly support – primarily, I propose, because 'loving one's neighbour' and love within the 'love frame' are different concepts that ought to be conceptualised as different phenomena. Both types of love, it is argued, do contain a moral dimension, however, one that is generated through the fulfilment of obligations. Moreover, how one fulfils these obligations is similar within both 'genuine' love and modern love: through responsibility for the well-being of the other and through bestowing value on others, enabling them to feel that their unique personhood has significance. Whom one has an obligation towards is, however, very different. Universality is the defining feature of 'neighbourly' obligation and morality, whilst exclusivity was an essential feature of the love frame and the obligations associated with 'doing' love in modern society.

Goffman's (1972) work on the moral nature of interactional and framing obligations did, however, provide an alternative way to think through the concept

of 'mutual co-responsibility' (Scheler, 1973). Social interaction and social order require collaboration between actors in order to remain, at least in appearance stable and orderly (Goffman, 1974; 1972; Msztal, 2001). This, Goffman claims, is the achievement of individuals collectively fulfilling their interactional and situational obligations to one another. This thesis proposed that this is one way in which individuals exist in a co-responsible relationship. Moreover, Goffman's (1972) concepts of 'deference' and 'demeanour' were used to explain the ways in which displaying love achieves the bestowal of value to others. I conclude this thesis by proposing that 'love' may not need to be the basis of wide scale social ties; rather, by understanding the command to 'love one's neighbour' as a command to show compassion to those in need, we do not need to reject modern conceptualisations of exclusive loving because the two types of action are not mutually exclusive. On this basis, then, I propose that further exploration of broader social obligations, particularly those afforded to strangers and those associated with 'compassion', may prove more fruitful in understanding wide scale social ties and solidarity than a focus on love has.

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Goffman's concept of 'frame analysis' was proposed as a theoretical framework through which the relationship between individual actions and experiences could be thought through; the concept of frame was described in chapter three as a tool that organises individual experiences by providing meaning and enabling people to interpret situations. Within the research project it was used as a theoretical device to conceptualise the ways in which shared ideas about love exist outside individual feelings and experiences whilst not marginalising the role of individual action in 'doing' social life. Within Goffman's sociology of frames the

individual is understood as the user (and sometimes the manipulator) of frames, but not their creators: 'I frame my experiences, but the structure of the frame is prior to my experiences' (Crook and Taylor, 1980: 245). Chapter three also examined the concept in relation to love and it was argued that the collection of shared ideas about love – which individuals draw on to interpret their own feelings and the behaviours of others as being loving ones – can be referred to as the 'love frame'.

The love frame was proposed as being a 'social frame' (Goffman, 1974), the defining features of which are the existence of sets of rules regarding proper conduct and accountability for performing these rules appropriately. Unlike 'natural' frames, which contain no appraisal of human behaviour because natural 'laws' are appealed to as the governor of occurrences, human actions within social frames are considered to be the 'guided doings' of motivated social actors. Because intentionality is considered to be involved in 'social' action, human beings must be able to account for what they are doing when operating within social frames. More importantly, however, they must be able to account for *why* they are doing it: what an individual 'does [within social frames] can be described as "guided doings". These doings subject the doer to "standards", to social appraisal of his action' (Goffman, 1974: 22).

Goffman (1981; 1974) argues, however, that the vast majority of the time individuals are unaware of why they are doing what they are doing, perhaps only being able to account for their behaviour after the fact and with some prompting (Goffman, 1974). He argues that this is only possible if individuals can be involved in the world in an unreflexive way. This situation seems to be a paradoxical one, then, because action within social frames is considered to be intentional and

motivated, but at the same time actors are considered unreflexive most of the time and unable to account for their (nonetheless) intentional behaviour. Goffman's work on frames, specifically social frames, attempts to account for the existence of this paradox.

Goffman (1981; 1974) suggests that for every social situation a person may find themselves in, there are a set(s) of conventions that enable individuals to interpret the situation as one that already has meaning for them, and that orientates people to behave in particular ways in light of this. He calls the sets of conventions, which incorporates physical aspects of the scene and the behaviours of others, a 'frame'. The ability that social actors have to quickly 'glance' at a situation and apply meaning to it is for Goffman (1974: 38-39), made possible by frames:

'It seems that we can hardly glance at anything now without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now. ... glancing itself seems to be made possible by the quick confirmation that viewers can obtain ... In sum, observers actively project their frames of reference into the world immediately around them'.

This quote also highlights the ways in which frames create expectations about what will happen. Expectations about what will happen, quickly become expectations about what *ought* to happen and thus frames contain obligations that must be fulfilled if a situation or action is to proceed, uninterrupted, as normal (Misztal, 2001; Goffman, 1974).

After describing the features of social frames, chapter three then proposed that love can be considered a social frame because it is deemed as an event that 'incorporates the will, aim, and controlling effort of a ...human being' (Goffman, 1974: 22). Moreover, it was argued that ideas regarding what constitutes 'love' and

'loving behaviour' are not something that individuals spontaneously and uniquely generate; rather they are experiences governed by pre-existing set of rules and conventions that facilitate a shared understanding of what it means to 'love'. Without a shared understanding, love would be difficult to demonstrate to others in a meaningful way and impossible to represent/perform culturally when it is detached from loving feeling. Defining love as a *social* frame is important because it means that there are expectations of what love should 'look' like i.e. how it should be 'done'. As noted, where there are expectations there are also obligations and it is from within this line of argumentation that ideas regarding the amorality of modern love are challenged.

Doing a 'frame analysis' of love was, however, challenging and required methodological flexibility and perseverance because Goffman's work provides little guidance on doing a frame analysis. Moreover, it is unlikely that there is one methodological model that 'fits' all frame analyses; instead the nature of the frame to be explored should be the guiding principle of methodological choices. Three methods were utilised in generating empirical data: individual interviews, focus group discussions and qualitative questionnaires. All were valuable ways of accessing ideas and beliefs about love and provided different kinds of information about the 'love frame'. It was concluded, therefore, that none of the methods in isolation best access a frame; rather the use of multiple methods in combination is likely to provide the most fruitful data. Again, which methods these would be depends on the frame to be studied. In the case of 'emotion frames' I propose that a combination of qualitative questionnaires focusing on 'behaviours' of emotions, followed up with discussion (via interview or focus group) would be helpful in orientating participants to the issues to be discussed, whilst allowing them to

develop their ideas and relate these to their experiences. Such a combination would allow participants to provide concrete examples of emotional behaviour and then explain these choices to a researcher.

The findings of the research were presented in chapter five and the seven analytical categories identified in the research accounts were explicated. All seven of the categories were used by participants to understand love, though in different ways according to different contexts and relationship types. Ways of 'knowing' love, 'doing' love and 'recognising' love were achieved in all seven of the categories, though to varying degrees, such that none of them could be said to inform one particular aspect of the love frame. There were, however, categories that primarily accomplished one task more than another task. 'Positive communication' was, for example, considered a way of 'doing love' to others. This necessarily meant that it was also a crucial way in which people recognised the behaviours of others as expressing loving feelings towards them. The *desire* to communicate positively, alongside the willingness to make the effort to do, was also, however, used as a way of interpreting one's own feelings as love and so 'positive communication' was also a way of 'knowing love', even though this was not its primary task. The findings of the research showed the various ways in which love matters to individuals and to the way they conduct their personal lives, thereby supporting the claim that understanding love is significant when seeking to understanding personal lives.

Chapter six then examined these categories and proposed various ways in which understanding these categories as being constitutive of the love frame – and thereby as being guiding principles of loving action and relationships maintenance – could be beneficial to sociological work outside the immediate sphere of the

sociology of emotions. This chapter demonstrated the ways in which the findings support the second sociological claim about love, namely that it has a greater impact on our lives than affecting our close, intimate relationships. It was argued that diverse issues such as childhood 'wellbeing', the provision of social care, and experiences of domestic violence may all be areas within which having a working conceptualisation of love matters to the sociological understandings of these topics. It is suggested that more than just our close relationships are informed and navigated with reference to love and on this basis a coherent 'sociology of love' would be beneficial.

Chapters one and two examined the sociological literature that exists within sociology and organised them according to their primary concerns. There was a significant split in the literature in this regard, primarily concerning the nature of love and how it functions in society. It was suggested that most of the theorists who have written about love can be organised into two 'groups': firstly, there are those who believe that love has a 'genuine' moral essence and, secondly, there are those who do not. Those who propose that love is inherently moral do so by proposing that love is a capacity of a loving subject and not a response to a lovable object. They claim that love's moral potential exists in the 'innately prompted' co-responsibility all individuals have towards themselves and to others (Bauman, 2003: 92; Scheler, 1973). In short they argue that the moral potential of love is best expressed by the Judeo-Christian command to 'love one's neighbour as oneself' (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995); if a society conceptualises love in this way, it is argued, social solidarity and unity amongst people will be the outcome. But what does 'loving one's neighbour' involve?

Within the gospel of Luke in the New Testament of the Bible, Jesus is asked by a lawyer for clarification on what it means to 'love one's neighbour as oneself'.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is given as a response:

'Jesus replied [to the lawyer], "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him he passed by the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had *compassion*. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers? He [the lawyer] said, "The one who showed him *mercy*." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise"'.

– Luke 10: 37 (emphases added)

Within this passage loving your neighbour involves responding with *compassion* and *mercy* to those in our immediate presence who have needs. The Samaritan did not know the beaten man and so neither knowledge nor an existing relationship, were preconditions of his helping him. Moreover, the Samaritan was likely an enemy of the Israelite victim and so his assistance was unlikely to have been given on a notion of shared identity. Rather, the fulfilment of 'loving one's neighbour' was described as being achieved through taking responsibility for the well-being of those within close proximity, based not on *feelings* of love, but on feelings of compassion.

This account of 'loving one's neighbour' found in the Bible and those found within the sociological literature are similar. Like this parable, within sociology descriptions of the command to 'love your neighbour' appear to be saying 'fulfil your obligations of responsibility to all those you encounter in co-presence' and

this echoes the principles found within the Bible. Accepting responsibility involves caring for others by responding to their needs during co-presence (Bauman, 1990, 2003; Fromm, 1995). It also seems to involve protecting and promoting human dignity (Bauman, 1990, 2000, 2001). In this respect 'love' is an action placed in the world that comes through a capacity of the individual to fulfil this obligation; it is not a responsive feeling.

There is another claim about love that the same authors make, however, and this is the one that is most dominant within sociology: 'love' is described as a socially constructed phenomenon, or one that has a social dimension, that changes over time. Within this body of literature love is considered important to individuals and the networks they exist within, but many of the theorists writing from within this approach make no connections regarding the wider implications of love (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1992).

Interestingly all the theorists discussed within this thesis agree that love *has* a social dimension, such that love is 'inseparably connected with the social realm' (Fromm, 1995: 101), but the primary distinction between theorists writing within this theoretical 'group' regards whether they see love as having a social dimension that is (or may be) distinct from its 'genuine' nature, or whether they believe that love is solely a social construction. Theorists who hold this latter view point to the changeability of ideas and practices of love over time and they do so, largely, to direct our attention to current ideas and practices of love. The increasing particularisation and individualisation of love in modern, capitalist society has been proposed as the major influence on modern love relationships. Individualisation and particularisation both emphasise the ways in which decisions about who to love and have become matters of individual choice.

Chapter seven sought to compare both of these perspectives with the description of the love frame outlined in chapter five, which proposed that the love frame conceptualises love as an individual, personal feeling. This feeling is considered to drive loving behaviour and is directed towards particular others in response to the personality of the person. The description and analysis of the love frame were able to confirm or deny the first two claims of sociology regarding the importance of an understanding of the emotion within the discipline. 'Testing' the third claim was not possible, however, without comparing it to the model of 'genuine' loving found within the literature. By examining the moral implications of different models of loving, the extent to which contemporary understandings of love contain a moral potential can be explored. If 'genuine' love is moral because it 'loves its neighbour as itself', then the degree to which love within the love frame 'loves its neighbour' ought to be an indicator of the morality contained within modern loving. Part I of chapter seven concluded by suggesting that on this basis modern love is amoral.

This is because 'love' within the love frame was described as a responsive feeling that is brought about through relationships with others. This type of love involves action but these actions largely *express* feelings that exist, at least some of the time. The claim that moral behaviour involves 'loving your neighbour as yourself' makes little sense when love is conceived of as a positively experienced feeling and not an impulse or capacity of a person (Bauman, 2003; Fromm, 1995). Moreover, 'loving your neighbour', as both the sociological literature and Biblical account see it, is always completely other-focused and is costly to the individual because it involves sacrificing for others, alongside living in a perpetual state of uncertainty, never knowing beforehand what you will be called to do as part of

fulfilling your obligations to the other (Bauman, 2000; 1990). Descriptions of 'love' within the love frame suggest that modern love contains *some* similar ideas and actions – obligations, responsibility, sacrifice, investment in the well-being of the beloved – but love as a positively-experienced feeling, even just some of the time, contains an element of self-focus because love is 'done' for both the self and the other; reciprocity of feeling and loving action is expected in all but exceptional cases.

'Loving one's neighbour' also involves responding to their needs, not necessarily entering into an ongoing relationship with them. The necessity of 'knowledge' of the other, as a pre-requisite of loving them highlights this difference between conceptions of love within the literature and conceptions of love within the love frame. Bauman (2003; 2000; 1990) argues that our responsibility to love others exists prior to relationship with them; *proximity* is therefore the precondition of responsibility, not knowledge. In this respect 'the neighbour' is an unending category of persons that potentially includes all people because it is defined by proximity and not by choice. In the research findings, however, knowing the other was a precondition of loving them. This makes sense when love is understood as a responsive feeling. Within this framework the 'neighbour' is a very particular and exclusive category of persons, applied only when positive affection is felt. Again, on this basis, it could and has been argued that modern ideas about love are amoral (Bauman, 2003; 2000; Fromm, 1995).

So if 'accepting the precept of loving one's neighbour is the birth act of humanity' (Bauman, 2003: 78) then it seems that we must either remake the concept of 'neighbour' within modern society or be more specific about what we mean when we say 'love'. One way of reconceptualising the category of 'neighbour'

would be to translate the potential universality of the category, into a practical universality. So that all persons are included equally in the concept of neighbour and none are given priority over other persons. According to Scheler (1973; 1961) there is a potential danger in this, however, because indiscriminate affection for all others risks a universal benevolence that is solely interested in the sum total of individuals without recognition of the individuals that make up the totality. Within this view, then, one's neighbour can become everyone and no-one. Scheler (1973) proposes that this generates a weak type of social cohesion – representable solidarity – within which each individual has equivalence with all others who occupy the same social position.

Likewise, Bauman (2000) argues that moral behaviour should respond to the unique character and needs of the person present before us. Love seeks to perceive and nurture the distinctiveness of each individual by protecting and confirming the 'dignity of bearing a unique, irreplaceable and non-disposable value' (Bauman, 2003: 80-81). When 'neighbours' are proximal people we have the ability to reach out and act in such a way as to meet their needs. This would be challenging if *all* people were considered to be neighbours equally and none had priority over others by virtue of proximity. Apathy would be the consequence of an increasing inability to help others that one nonetheless feels obligated towards (Bauman, 2000). Bauman (1990) proposes that this has happened to some degree through the use of modern technology, which displays human suffering to people who have no means by which to alleviate it. Expanding the concept of neighbour does not, therefore, appear to be a helpful objective.

Part II of chapter seven, however, proposed an alternative way of characterising morality – not only as a universal and unconditional regard and care

for the other, but as a regard and care that is directed towards particular others. It was argued that love lacks the moral dimension that the literature considers important – a universal morality – but does not lack a moral dimension altogether. Instead of ‘love’ being idealised as the foundation for universal solidarity then, the research findings propose that modern love may be the foundation of a ‘local solidarity’ within which daily moral acts of loving sustain ‘local’ social bonds. Goffman’s (1972) concepts of ‘deference’ and ‘demeanour’ were applied as a way of understanding the means by which ‘ritual’ acts of love sets apart individuals from others around them and through this the individual becomes a ‘sacred’ object to the other. These little acts of personalised care that come from being known and loved demonstrate to the beloved that they are valuable and worthy of attention. Loving deference and demeanour, therefore, are acts of interactional care that when performed fulfil the obligation to take responsibility for the well-being of the other.

The concepts of deference and demeanour are similar in their objectives but deferential behaviour communicates to the other *about* the other, whilst one’s demeanour communicates to the other about oneself. Showing deference is largely done to communicate positive regard for the other in a way that is meaningful for them and the social context they are in. A person’s demeanour image is also a communication but one that indicates who they consider themselves to be in relation to the other interactant and those around them. It also communicates how a person expects to be treated within an interaction. Demeanour thus provides other interactants with cues about how to respond to that person. Deference and demeanour work together within interaction/co-presence, such that any individual will be giving off a demeanour image of themselves at the same as

behaving deferentially towards others. This makes a shared understanding vital to the proceeding interaction. On this basis Goffman (1972) argues that the set of behaviours a culture's defines as communicating deference and demeanour are governed by rules.

Wherever there are rules there are obligations to follow these rules. Failing to follow them can disrupt social order, makes social life much more challenging to navigate quickly, and cause interpersonal conflict within interaction. In this respect, then, following the rules – fulfilling one's obligation – can be seen as a moral action (Rawls, 1987; Goffman, 1972). Moreover, both 'deference' and 'demeanour' are claims-making tools that communicate to others what type of person one is: are they a person who follows interactional rules, and can they be relied upon to do so consistently over time? Fulfilling one's obligations on one occasion may then give the impression that a person will follow them on every occasion and this sets up expectations about future behaviour and involvements. These are also experienced as obligations. One's reputation is an accumulation of another's experience of their past obligation fulfilment.

This project has argued that what is observable within society in general, was also described within the research accounts. Participants described performing certain acts of 'care' as a way of communicating to the other that they are valued and have a 'special' status in comparison to those around them. Saying 'I love you', for example, was described as action that communicated to the recipient that they held the status of beloved. These were performed in addition to the general deference a person would give another person by virtue of having a shared 'personhood'. Loving behaviours, then, were considered 'special' deferential acts that bestowed 'extra' value on somebody and 'set them apart' from those around

them. These were described as positive experiences that gave individuals a sense of belonging, as mattering to someone in an extraordinary way. This can be described as 'local solidarity'; it creates and maintains social bonds between people who are regularly in co-presence.

Participants also described the ways in which deference and demeanour were experienced as obligations. These discussions focused largely on occasions when themselves or others had failed to fulfil their interactional obligations by failing to show the proper deference or had misrepresented themselves through their demeanour image. The consequences of these occasions were described as negative in terms of feeling and other more practical outcomes. These included feelings of discomfort, minor conflicts and arguments at one end of the scale and relationship (marital) breakdown on the other. Consistently failing to meet previously established expectations was not only considered socially problematic in that situation, but was also understood by the other party as expressing an attitude whereby their status as 'beloved' was under consideration. People doubted that they were cared *about* because they were not being cared *for* within the interaction.

Loving interactions, then, are governed by rules of conduct that guide appropriate deferential behaviour. Following these rules contributes to others feeling loved, cared for and set apart from others and therefore as being someone who is valued. Moreover, following the rules establishes expectations about future behaviours in other interactions. If an individual consistently demonstrates care in a particular way, for example, other parties may come to expect that these behaviours will be forthcoming in future interactions. If they are not this may

cause someone to question the relationship status. Participants within the research communicated that this was so.

Because performing deference and demeanour are not done in isolation but always in relationship with another person, they are social actions. They are also collaborative ones because they demand that both parties adequately perform them to each other in acceptable ways. Both parties are relying on the other to accurately perform deference to one another, to correctly interpret the demeanour image being presented, and to accept these performances as legitimate and then respond appropriately. In this regard each is mutually responsible for themselves and the other interactant. On this basis I argue that giving and receiving deference and demeanour to others, especially in relation to love where the stakes are high, is one way in which Scheler's (1973) concept of mutual co-responsibility, and the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself', can be understood in practical ways. I also propose that these actions challenge the notion that modern love is amoral; rather the sphere of morality is much smaller than the literature might hope for, but that it is the 'smallness' of the sphere – the exclusivity of love – that gives loving behaviour the 'special' deferential impact that it does. If love was less exclusive, then loving behaviours would be unlikely to communicate the high level of value that it did within the research accounts.

It is acknowledged, however, that the morality associated with modern loving and achieved through giving 'special' deference and demeanour to loved ones is not a 'universal' morality that cares for all people, but an 'elective' morality that cares for a few *chosen* people. Moreover, although obligations exist within both kinds of love, modern love contains 'local' obligations that are associated with 'choice'. The problem with modern love, then, appears to be that the obligatory

aspect of 'obligations' is undermined if one can choose to 'opt-out' of them according to who one is encountering at any given moment. Modern love may therefore be considered less moral than 'genuine' love not because it fails to fulfil social obligations, but because it fails to do so unconditionally and universally, such that accepting responsibility for others is not an 'obligation' outside of making a choice for it to be so.

The project has proposed, however, that even though choice is a part of modern love relationships, obligations *are* still present – in society in general and in love in particular – and these are tacitly experienced as *obligations* and not as 'optional extras'. One such obligation, Misztal (2001) argues, is the obligation to maintain social order. Her work proposes that in order for social life to be treated as 'predictable, reliable and legible', which it is, a sense of 'normality' must be constructed and maintained (Misztal, 2001). Individuals need to trust that social life is proceeding as 'normal' and this requires social collaboration. Her work proposes that 'social trust' is generated as a by-product of 'normality' and the construction of 'normality' is achieved through individuals collectively fulfilling their obligations, and thus contributing to social order (Misztal, 2001). Using and applying this idea to love, it is argued that love relationships also require a sense of 'normality' to be produced, in order that the relationship does not break down. Individuals within love relationships, then, must fulfil their obligations to one another as part of maintaining their bond. The participants in this research appeared committed to fulfilling this obligation and some recounted with sadness, occasions when ex-partners or family members had failed to fulfil their obligations, leading to relationship cessation. It was not, therefore, treated lightly as an 'opt in if you wish' obligation.

Nonetheless, despite proposing that the amorality of modern love is overstated within the sociological literature, exploring the phenomenon of 'love' when seeking to understand what generates and maintains wider scale social bonds is not likely to be the best place to look. The command to 'love your neighbour' and modern ideas about love are too different in their focus to reconcile them. Because of this the sociological literature has tended to prioritise one over the other, claiming that 'loving your neighbour' is infinitely more moral than modern love and should therefore be favoured. But, I argue, the two are not mutually exclusive or incompatible.

I propose that the love associated with 'loving one's neighbour' can more accurately be described as feelings and actions of 'compassion' and 'mercy' for proximal others, regardless of whether we know them or not. This is different to modern conceptions of love, which is considered a feeling that is directed towards known persons on the basis of the knowledge one has about them. Modern love involves a positive regard for what is known about others and it is this feeling that prompts us to care for them. Rather than abandoning exclusive love for the sake of universal love, however, acknowledging the morality involved with loving particular others and recognising the ways in which this creates and maintains a 'local solidarity' means that both types of love can be valued within society.

In sum, then, when establishing whether society upholds the obligation to 'love your neighbour as yourself', 'love' is probably not the best place to look. When seeking to evaluate the morality of a society we should not only look at how we treat loved ones. In line with Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, what is likely to be more telling of a society's moral compass is how it treats strangers. Goffman's concept of the interaction order, alongside the contextual 'frame' of

understanding, is a good place to start with this task. Because this thesis has demonstrated that an empirically grounded account of love is possible *and* that it can contribute to many areas of social theorising, a sociology of love should not, however, be abandoned. This research showed that love *matters* to people and on this basis it should matter to sociology too.

Appendices

- i Invitation to participate
- ii Participant Information and Consent Form
- iii Qualitative Questionnaire
- iv Research Monitoring Form
- v Research recruitment poster
- vi Summary findings report

Appendix i: Invitation to participate

School of Sociology and Social Policy
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

I would like to invite you to participate in my PhD research study on love. This letter will give you a bit more information about what is involved in taking part in the research.

You have been given this letter because either you have indicated a prior interest in participating; you know someone who has agreed to participate and they think you might like to be involved too; or because I am interested in getting the views of a variety of people and would like your help in achieving this. Participation in the research is voluntary and you do not have to take part.

The focus of my study is love in British society. The aim of the study is to understand how people demonstrate that they love someone (or something) and also, how they understand that someone loves them or that someone loves another person. Taking part in the study involves completing a questionnaire. The questionnaire will ask a number of questions and space is provided for you fill in your answers. Assistance will be given should you have any difficulties in filling out the questionnaire. Any information you provide me with will be treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be reported in any way to identify you. You will remain anonymous.

Participation in this research is voluntary. There will be no payment for your participation.

By completing the questionnaire and handing it back to me you are consenting to the use of your answers within my research. If you wish to withdraw from my research you may do so by contacting me on the details below.

Should you have any questions or wish to take part please contact me on the following number: 07534005061 or via email: N.Barnes@leeds.ac.uk. Alternatively you may contact one of my supervisors at the University of Leeds: Dr Angharad Beckett (0113 343 4409) or Dr Mark Davis (0113 343 7117).

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Best wishes,

Natasha

Natasha Barnes.

Appendix ii: Participant Information and Consent Form

School of Sociology and Social Policy



Participant Information and Consent Form

Project Title: Love: A Frame Analysis. Exploring Love in Contemporary UK Society.
Principle Researcher: Natasha Barnes

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to sign the consent section. By signing it you are telling me that you:

About The Research Project

This research is looking at shared ideas about love in UK society. It is focusing on how people demonstrate love to others and how they recognise that others love them.

Most of the work in sociology that has looked at love has not been based on the everyday experiences of ordinary people. This research will be based on people's experiences of

1. What does participation in the research involve?

Participation in this project requires you to be interviewed. You will be asked about your experiences of love and relationships. You do not need any special knowledge to take part in this research, it is your opinion I am interested in. I will ask you questions that require you to discuss something, you will be able to choose what you say and how you answer the questions.

2. Do I have to take part in this research project?

Participation in this research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw

3. What will happen to information about me?

Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research project. It will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law.

In any publication and/or presentation, information will be presented in such a way that you cannot be identified. I will not use your real name in any written document that is publicly available.

4. Is this research approved?

This research project is being supervised by Dr Angharad Beckett and Dr Mark Davis of the University of Leeds, within the department of Sociology and Social Policy (Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law). If you want any further information concerning this project or if you have any problems which may be related to your involvement in the

I have read, or have had this document read to me in a language that I understand, and I understand the purposes of this research project as described within it.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

I freely agree to participate in this research project, as described.

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep.

Participant's name (printed)

Signature

Date

Declaration by researcher: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher's name (printed)

Signature

Date

Appendix iii: Interview Guide

1. 'Were you able to identify any examples of love?' [Ask participant to describe if so. Prompts: what part of this example demonstrates love as opposed to any other emotion? Can you identify any other emotions?]
2. 'Because I'd like to look at love in its broadest sense I'd like us to discuss who or what you love'. [Ask participant to jot down who/what they love. Explain that it will be used as a prompt for the discussion]. [Prompts: anybody in your past?] Ask participant to talk through what they've written.
3. 'Do you think there are different types of love? Why or why not?'
4. 'I'd like it if you could recall a time or occasion where you've experienced loving someone and tell me about this occasion please'. [Use mind map as prompt if necessary].
5. 'What was it about that occasion that helped you to know that what you were feeling was love?'
6. [Ask participants to choose a different person/thing/relationship from their mind map and repeat the previous question].
7. 'What is it about these experiences that made you identify it with love and not something else?'
8. 'So now I'd like you to talk to me about what you think you do to demonstrate that you love other people. You can give me as many examples as you like'.
9. 'I'm now going to ask you to reflect on something slightly different. I'd like you to think about someone or something that you don't love and I'd like you to talk to me about how you know that your feelings about that person or thing are or were not love'.
10. [Depending on their answer ask them what it is that is different between the emotions they mentioned in their answer to the previous question and love].
11. 'I'd like you to talk to me about someone or something that loves or has loved you now please'.
12. 'How do you indicate to others that you love them?'
13. 'How do you recognise that others love you? What do they need to do in order to demonstrate love to you so that you feel it?'
14. 'What would you like someone to do to demonstrate love to you?' [Follow up: is this the same for everyone they've written down?].
15. 'What else would you like to tell me about love that I haven't asked you about?'

Appendix iv: Qualitative Questionnaire

LOVE. Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in my research by filling in this questionnaire. There are no right and wrong answers; it is your opinions I am interested in. If you do not wish to answer a question then please feel free to move to the next one. Many thanks. Natasha Barnes (Researcher).

Q1. Firstly I'd like you to note down in the space below some words/ideas/concepts that you associate with love. You can do this in any way you please – as a list or a diagram.

Q2. Do you think there are different types of love?

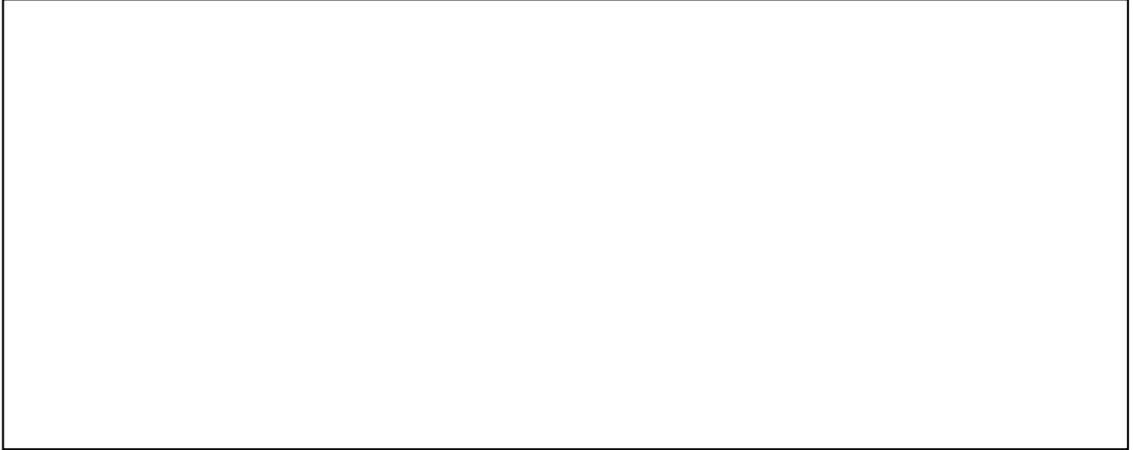
Yes (Go to Qs2a. and 2b.)

No (Go to Q3.)

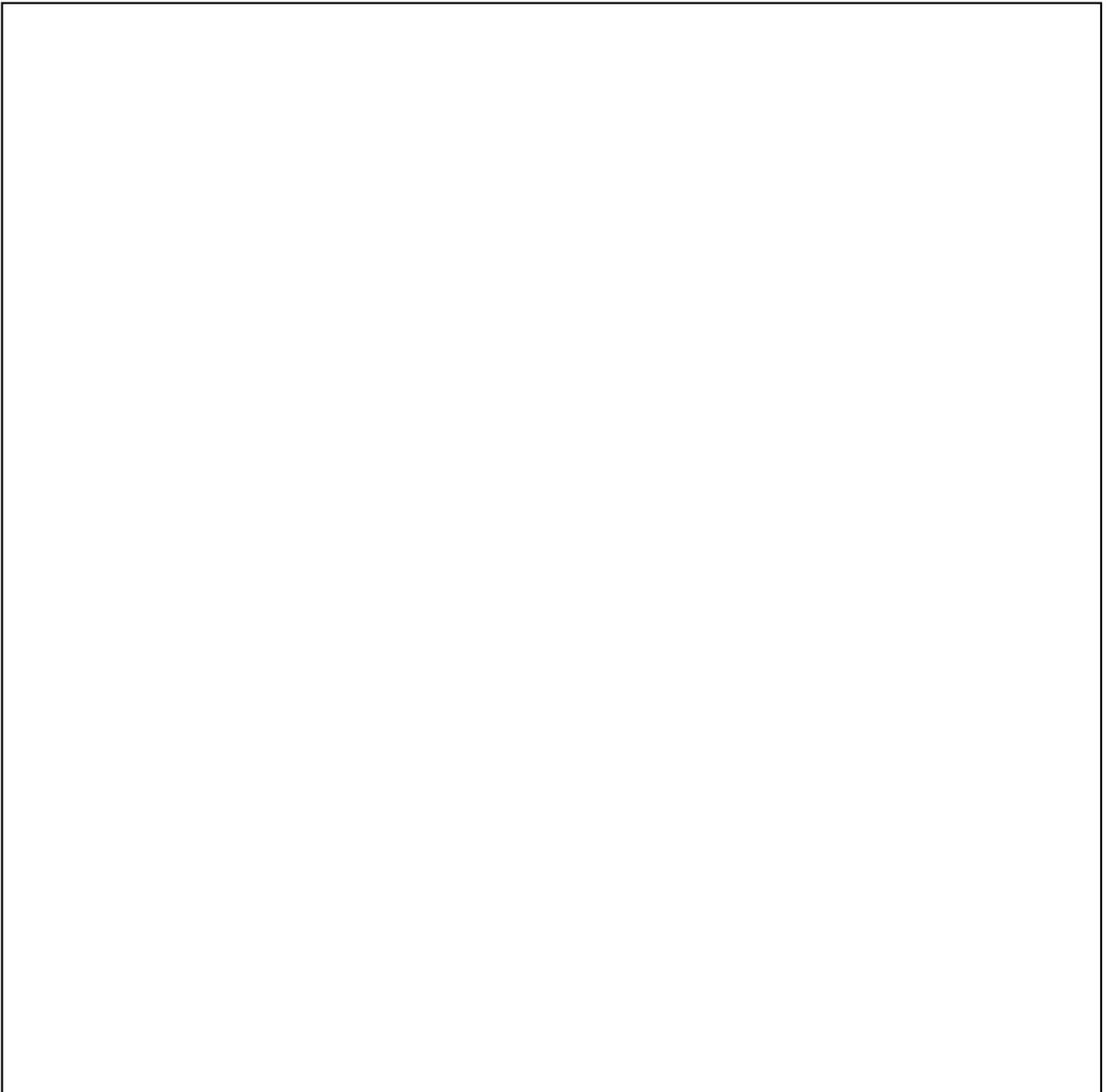
Q2a. What are the different types of love?

Q2b. What makes these loves different from one another?

Q3. What are the differences between **loving** someone and **liking** someone?



Q4. What do you do to/for others to show them that you love them? You can provide a general answer but specific examples would also be extremely helpful, i.e. "I show my [mother/sister/son/partner etc] I love them by ..."



Q5. What does someone need to do or say so that you know that they love you?
Again a general answer is sufficient but specific examples are very helpful, i.e. "I know my [mother/sister/son/partner etc] love me because they ..."

In the following scenarios I'd like you to imagine you were observing two people interacting with one another. What behaviours and/or gestures would indicate to **you** that one or more of these people **do love** one another?

Romantic relationship:

Parent/child:

Family members:

Other relationship (please specify):

Similarly in these scenarios I'd like you to imagine you were observing two people interacting with one another. What behaviours and/or gestures would indicate to **you** that one or more of these people **do not love** one another?

Romantic relationship:

Parent/child:

Family members:

Other relationship (please specify):

This is a space for you to add anything to this questionnaire that hasn't been asked or covered in the questions. You can use this space to expand answers to questions where you did not have enough space. You can use it to note down any additional thoughts that you think would be interesting or relevant for me to know. Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire, your help is very much

Appendix v: Research Monitoring Form

School of Sociology and Social Policy

**Research Monitoring Form**

As part of my research I would like to include the views of different types of people.

To do this I am asking everyone who participates in the study to fill in this form. It will be used to help me to understand the research sample as a whole. It will also allow me to monitor whether there are any people or groups of people under-represented in the research. It is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to. Completion (or non-completion) will not affect your overall participation in the research. The form will not identify you in any way and all details will remain anonymous.

Thank you for taking part in my research.

Natasha Barnes.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. How would you describe your relationship status?
4. Do you have any children? If so, how many and of what age are they?
5. How would you describe your sexuality?
6. What is your religion?
7. How would you describe your ethnicity?
8. What is your current/last job?
9. Do you consider yourself to have an impairment or disability?

Appendix vii: Summary Findings Report.

Dear

First of all I just want to say thank you again for taking part in my research. Your contribution is very much appreciated.

I thought you might find it interesting to see what I found out in all my discussions so below is a summary of my findings.

Lots of you mentioned that you thought love was hard to understand and put in to words because it is so personal. Interestingly, however, most of the conversations I had with people contained the same themes or ideas about what love is like, how we demonstrate it to others and how we like it to be demonstrated to us. These are the themes that came out of the discussions:

- Togetherness – all of you told me that spending time together is an integral part of loving someone. You said that wanting to spend time with someone is one of the ways you understand your own feelings as being 'love'. You also told me that when someone else wants to spend time with you that makes you feel loved. You said that when you love somebody you also feel an emotional 'togetherness' with them, which you experience as an intimate connection with the other person – a sense of being on the 'same side'.
- Closeness – everyone described being close to somebody as being an important way to demonstrate love to them and that it is an important way that somebody demonstrates love to you. This includes physical affection like hugging, kissing, and sharing personal space. For romantic partners it also includes sexual intimacy. You also told me that being close to somebody is about more than just physical closeness, but involves emotional closeness too. This means feeling comfortable to be yourself with the other person and not feeling judged by them.
- Care – you told me that loving someone involves caring for them. 'Care' includes lots of physical and emotional acts. It could be something as simple as running a bath for someone or making them a cup of tea, or as involved as rearranging your schedule to help them in a difficult situation. Some of you said that you had realised who really loved you when caring for you became more challenging – those who loved you continued caring for you, even when it was difficult.

- Knowledge – everyone spoke about having knowledge of the other person as being an important aspect of loving them. You described the difficulties of loving someone if you didn't know them well. You also told me that you demonstrate your knowledge of someone in practical ways – by buying them gifts that you know they'll like or knowing how they like their coffee, for example. You said that when someone demonstrates knowledge of you it shows you that they love and care about you and helps you feel loved by them.
- Positive communication – this was an important part of loving someone. You said that saying or hearing the words 'I love you' was an important part of demonstrating love to each other. You also said that saying 'I love you' had to be backed up by other positive acts of non-verbal communication such as eye-contact and smiling, alongside other aspects of loving such as care and physical affection. Positive communication between other people was one way that you told me you recognised love between other people.
- Prioritising the other – everyone said that sometimes loving other people is hard work and sometimes it involves sacrifice. You said that loving somebody means that at times you have to put their needs above your own and above the needs of other people in your life. You also told me that your willingness to prioritise other people was one way that you knew whether you loved them or not.

Throughout the discussions we had, everyone made distinctions between different types of love. All aspects of loving someone are relevant, but some people require more of one type of behaviour than others. Some examples that you gave are:

- Siblings - In general people said that they love their siblings but that love relationships between brothers and sisters don't require you to spend as much time with each other as in romantic relationship, for example. Instead, people spoke about an expectation that if they needed something from their brother or sister they know they would help, but on a day-to-day basis they were often not a part of their lives.
- Romantic love - On the other hand, love between romantic partners is much more involved. This type of love involves spending lots of time together, having the most in-depth knowledge of each other, being physically close and affectionate to each other on a very regular basis, and caring for them in many different ways every day.
- Other people and things - Many people also spoke about the love they have for friends, animals and hobbies, for example. These types of love involve the same type of behaviours but with less regularity, and the same types of feelings but with less intensity.

Overall you told me that love is an important part of your day-to-day lives. Love brings joy and happiness because sharing your life with someone is rewarding and gives your life meaning. It is also, sometimes, a source of worry and anxiety – you care and are invested in other people and your relationships with them and you don't want anything to take that away.

You spoke about the pleasure you get from demonstrating love to other people and told me that loving someone is rewarding. You also told me that sometimes it is hard work! You said that showing love to someone is something you have to do over and over again, not just once and for all time. Sometimes loving someone involves making sacrifices that you don't want to make or you have to do something that is uncomfortable to do; but you told me that you do them anyway because you love the other person and this love means more to you than any discomfort or sacrifice.

As part of my PhD I have compared these findings with what various sociologists have said about love in our society. I haven't included this analysis here, but if you would like more information about this please do get in touch via email:

N.Barnes@leeds.ac.uk

Thanks again for taking part; I hope you have found the results interesting. If you would like to give me any feedback or comments about the findings I would love to hear from you.

Best wishes,

Natasha Barnes.

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