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**Transforming Conditions of Lovelessness: A Critical Inquiry into Radical forms of
Love and Pedagogy**

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Radical forms of Love and Pedagogy**

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Dedication

This body of work is dedicated to stolen life, and to the loved ones who have lost their loved ones to gun violence, and state-sanctioned violence.

Acknowledgements

I am honored to be able to write this, and to have the space to acknowledge all who have helped guide me both personally and academically. I first would like to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Noah De Lissovoy for all of his time and consistent encouragement throughout the development of this project. This work has been largely inspired from my time in the Cultural Studies in Education program, and the amazing instruction by Dr. De Lissovoy, Dr. Luis Urrieta Jr. and Dr. Keffrelyn Brown. I am deeply thankful for all that I have learned from them, as well as all of the support they have provided me thus far. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Graham Slater for his continued support and encouragement, I would not have ended up here if it were not for the direction and support that Graham offered me as an undergraduate at UNR.

Thank you to my loved ones; my sister Madison, my brother Jr, my best friends Laura and Daniel, my libra grandmothers Anola and Pat. And lastly, to my mother Chrisella and father Brian—this whole journey has been because of both of you.

And to my dad—I am still carrying out that pinky promise.

Abstract

Transforming Conditions of Lovelessness: A Critical Inquiry into Radical forms of Love and Pedagogy

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Abstract: Within the body of educational research, limited research exists on the role of critical and political forms of love in reshaping pedagogical practices and motivating liberatory social movements and struggles. Critical education scholars have adopted the terms *radical* or *revolutionary* love in order to distinguish a politically-oriented conception of love from dominant notions of love as romantic, universal and unconditional. Combining theoretical frameworks of coloniality and critiques of neoliberalism, this study explores the role of radical love as a guiding force for liberatory pedagogical projects, and collective social movements and struggles. While some research has recognized the significance of radical love within a context of coloniality, the role of colonial, capitalist and neoliberal logics in complicating or obscuring engagement with radical love within critical pedagogy has not been largely explored. Through a textual analysis of three key texts, this study explores the following research questions:

- 1) What is radical love, and what is its relationship to critical pedagogy?

- 2) How do colonial and capitalist logics complicate or obscure educators/students/community members from authentically engaging in radical love?
- 3) How can radical love deepen our understanding of contemporary social movements and struggles against violence, and critical educational contexts. More specifically, what does radical love look like in the present context of social and political unrest, including the Black Lives Matter movement?

This work broadens the discussion around the role of love in motivating collective, political, and liberatory commitments within critical pedagogical contexts.

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Chapter 1: *Introduction*

Processes of alienation, dispossession, and domination have been perpetrated throughout the historical and contemporary context of the United States. The establishment of a settler colonial nation-state through continual processes of violence and dehumanization has continued to reflect and become entangled with the foundations of all political, economic and cultural processes within the U.S. Ultimately, these foundations of power (dispossession, domination and alienation) have set the groundwork for institutional and structural settings of lovelessness. By lovelessness, I do not mean to suggest the total absence of love, but rather the historical, generational, and strategic negation of love through multidimensional forms of violence—such as poverty, displacement, and police brutality—that hold specific and disproportionate consequences for racialized communities within the U.S.

However, in addition to these violences, we must be cognizant of the equally persistent agentic struggles against domination, both national and global, that have continued to resist multidimensional forms of oppression. Scholars and activists alike have long considered the instrumental role of love in fueling social movements and revolutions that continue to persist, resist and struggle against violence. Given the centrality of love in grounding collective struggles, it is also important to consider the political dimensions of love itself.

Some critical theorists have argued that love is inextricably connected to the politics of power (Ahmed, 2012; Lanas & Zembylas, 2014) in the sense that forms of love are offered to some groups, and denied to others. Some examples of this politicized

love are some peoples' access to economic stability, or 'freedom' from a constant threat of racialized state sanctioned violence. The structural organization of who gets to be loved, or who is *worthy* of love is ultimately a political question. We can clearly see the distinctions of who is worthy of love in our current moment with persistent state violence, through the pervasive state-sponsored killings of Black bodies, the continuous encroachment of Indigenous land (DAPL, Mauna Kea), restrictive and exclusionary immigration policies and more. These systemic negations of love each highlight the disposability of certain bodies and communities. The politics of disposability within the U.S context is best exemplified with Marc Lamont Hill's notion of 'Nobody.' In his book *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond*, Hill (2016) adopts the notion of "Nobody" after interviewing local Ferguson residents about the fatal shooting of 18 year old Michael Brown Jr.

Hill (2016) describes developing the notion of 'Nobody' after one interview where a resident stated; "They just left him there . . . Like he ain't belong to nobody." (p. 23). This extreme negation of humanity demonstrates the politics of the Nobody, such as whose body is valued and whose body is not. Hill continues:

Nobody. No parents who loved him. No community that cared for him. No medical establishment morally compelled to save him. No State duty-bound to invest in him, before or after his death. Michael Brown was treated as if he was not entitled to the most basic elements of democratic citizenship, not to mention human decency. He was treated as if he was not a person, much less an American. He was disposable. (p.23)

Drawing from Hill's (2016) notion of 'Nobody,' Desai (2020) asserts that to be 'Nobody' is "to witness how your humanity is stripped—to be flayed by the State for the mere fact of being poor, marginalized, and having a different hue, culture, accent, sexuality, citizenship, and religion" (p. 768). The 'Nobody' in U.S society is made explicitly clear through structural and systemic negations of love through processes of dehumanization. Given our current political contexts of lovelessness—which are not separate from historical accounts of violence and resistance—there is a need to consider the role of love within a society where alienation, dispossession and domination are normalized. However, the role of love is not just a question of resistance and political struggle(s), but is also a pedagogical one. Critical education scholars have long argued for education to be recognized as a necessary space for radical social change (Reyes, Radina, & Aronson, 2018). Further, some critical education scholars have begun to specifically consider the role of love in reshaping pedagogical practices in order to expose, interrogate and resist relations of domination (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014).

Love, Politics and Education

In educational spaces, love has been commonly conceptualized in liberal or progressive teaching as an emotion that most educators have, such as 'loving' one's students by virtue of teaching. However, this conception of love as a 'natural' emotion as it relates to teaching does not consider the ways that love is conditional, contextual, and political. When love is restricted to the realm of emotions, it can become overly individualized, which ultimately conceals the systemic and political nature of love (Ahmed, 2012). Likewise, a naturalized or universal notion of love ignores the politics of

emotions, such as who is deemed worthy of love and whose existence is causing a disturbance (Ahmed, 2012; hooks 2000).

Rather than conceptualize love as solely an individualized emotion, critical scholars have considered the ways that love is crucial to how individuals foster collective commitments. Through foregrounding love as foundational for collective commitments, many critical education theorists have adopted the notion that love is a transformational political concept that plays a necessary role in any liberatory project against alienation and domination. The embracing of love as a political and transformational concept allows us to further consider the relationship between politics and emotions, and how this relationship can inform critically oriented pedagogical projects (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014).

While love has begun to be considered as both a political and pedagogical project, there is a need for scholars to further explore how a politically oriented form of love can inform critical education and liberatory social movements and struggles. Additionally, few studies have examined the various tensions that arise when engaging in ambiguous and often co-opted concepts such as love. By far, education scholars who have considered the centrality of a politically-oriented love in critical pedagogical projects and practices have been largely influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1994, 2005). His theory of education and critical pedagogy has an embedded theory of love, which is demonstrated by his emphasis on education as an act of love. Freire's notion of "armed love" is described as "a love that could be lively, forceful, and inspiring, while at the same time critical, challenging, and insistent" (Darder, 2002 p.40). This form of love

opposes any dull, romanticized, or apolitical depictions of love, and instead orients itself in a commitment to liberation.

Radical Love

Aligned with Friere's notion of "armed love," critical education scholars have adopted the terms *radical* or *revolutionary* love in order to distinguish a politically-oriented conception of love from dominant notions of love as romantic, unconditional and natural. These terms also work to highlight the political and liberatory dimensions of love that are often watered-down or negated all-together in mainstream depictions of love. Freire's primacy of love within his philosophy, pedagogy, and politics has been embraced by other scholars, most notably Antonia Darder (2002) who has expanded on Freire's theory of a radical love through developing an explicit pedagogy of love which considers the role of radical love in defying the logics of capitalism and coloniality, along with its political commitment to liberation both inside and outside of the classroom.

Critical scholar bell hooks (1994, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2004) has also provided significant theorizations of the political dimensions of love. hooks (1994) has called for an ethic of love in shaping our political visions in order to resist complicity within our current systems of domination. hooks (2000) argues that love is an action rather than a feeling which is essential in assuming accountability and responsibility for the choices we make, along with a recognition that our choices have consequences. hook's (1994, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2004) conception of love as both political and an action provides crucial implications for collective and liberatory commitments.

While Freire, Darder and hooks have contributed significantly to political and pedagogical theorizations of love, there are other emotions (such as anger, fear, pain and hate) that are equally as political and necessary to consider when theorizing radical love. Critical scholar Sara Ahmed (2012) offers a notable analysis of the politics of emotions more broadly, which explores the complex relationship between violence, power, and emotion. Ahmed (2012) explores the ways that emotions are embedded in histories of colonialism, slavery, and violence and how they shape the current conditions of society.

Statement of Purpose

Critical scholars have called for a deeper theorization of radical love as a political force that constitutes an intentional and communal engagement beyond the individual that is central to any liberatory framework. However, one area of investigation that has not been as widely addressed are the ways capitalist or colonial logics complicate individual and collective engagement with radical love. With these tensions in mind, this work will not only explore the ways that radical love can resist colonial and capitalist logics, but how these logics can complicate individual and collective engagement with radical love.

In order to further investigate these important tensions, this work will be oriented in several key conceptual starting points. First, this work will be situated in a theory of coloniality which has been notably explored by Aníbal Quijano (2000) and his notion of a “coloniality of power” which describes a global model of power that is rooted in cultural and material forms of domination and exploitation. The contributions of Frantz Fanon (1963) are also crucial in recognizing colonialism as an ongoing process that continues to

inform relations of racial and economic domination which are intimately tied to each other, and have been historically maintained. This concept also addresses the ways in which capitalism ultimately operates as a racial system. Embedded in this framework of coloniality is also a commitment to *decoloniality* that must not be overlooked. This study's consideration of decoloniality is grounded in a recognition of the U.S as a settler colonial nation-state, as well as a centering of indigenous sovereignty and futurity (Grande, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Another conceptual starting point for this study are critiques of neoliberalism which are not separate from the logics of coloniality, but offer closer reflections of the deep structures of capitalist logics that move beyond the sphere of economics and politics. A significant and broader critique of neoliberalism that is important for this study is the role of individualism in neoliberal education reform. Through individualism, larger concerns and commitments to social movements and transformative projects are restricted by alienating schooling structures (Giroux, 2006).

Noah De Lissovoy (2015, 2018) has considered the psychological, emotional and historically organized dimensions of neoliberalism. In his article "Pedagogy of the anxious: rethinking critical pedagogy in the context of neoliberal autonomy and responsabilization" De Lissovoy (2018) draws on the Lacanian notion of *drive* and *desire* as two concepts that reflect the psychoanalytical dimensions of neoliberalism. The impulse of *drive* reflects the capitalist logic of domination through the affordance of small and temporary pleasures through consumerism and communicative capitalism while *desire* reflects a larger long-term revolutionary project which surpasses the

predatory compulsions of neoliberalism. These conceptual foundations offer important considerations for the ways that authentically engaging in radical love in pedagogical settings may be complicated or obscured by deeply embedded capitalist/colonial logics and predatory impulses. By ‘authentic,’ I am referring to an individual and collective ability to engage in the shared principles of radical love as theorized by core critical scholars whom I have discussed above.

Through grounding my investigation with these conceptual frameworks of coloniality and critiques of neoliberalism, this paper will explore the role of radical love as a guiding force for collective commitments, liberatory pedagogical projects, and social movements and struggles. This study is also interested in the limitations that contemporary logics of domination pose for engaging with these liberatory commitments.

With these interests in mind, the following research questions will be explored:

- 1) What is radical love, and what is its relationship to critical pedagogy?
- 2) How do colonial and capitalist logics complicate or obscure educators/students/community members from authentically engaging in radical love?
- 3) How can radical love deepen our understanding of contemporary social movements and struggles against violence, and critical educational contexts. More specifically, what does radical love look like in the present context of social and political unrest, including the Black Lives Matter movement?

Significance of Work

Through an exploration of these questions, I hope to uncover the key components of radical love, such as the qualities that distinguish radical forms of love from other understandings of love. Additionally, as colonial and capitalist logics continue to influence the conditions of education, it is important to not only consider how radical love challenges colonial/capitalist logics, but conversely how these logics challenge our engagement with radical love as well. A closer examination into how these logics converge with radical love can hopefully provide further insight into how we can identify and resist the co-opting or devaluing of liberatory concepts such as radical love.

In addition to understanding the distinguishing qualities of radical love and the role of colonial/capitalist logics, I believe these questions are especially significant to consider given our current social moment, specifically within the context of the U.S. These inquiries are largely informed by the Black Lives Matter movement, with particular consideration to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, as well as the nationwide response to these murders and to this nation's history of sustaining a pervasive anti-Blackness. While this violent trend is not new, the uniqueness of this moment is also informed by a global pandemic that has only exacerbated existing unjust conditions, such as social and economic insecurity. It is my hope that this work will encourage others to consider the larger theoretical implications that this moment so overtly calls for. Additionally, I hope this work will broaden the discussion around the role of love, among other emotions, in founding collective, political, and liberatory commitments.

Connection to Study and Positionality

My scholarly interests and intellectual perspectives as a master's student in the Cultural Studies in Education program has been greatly informed by the academic guidance and work of Dr. Noah De Lissovoy, Dr. Luis Urrieta, and Dr. Keffrelyn Brown. It was through the course work from my master's program that I was introduced to theories of love embedded throughout critical pedagogy, decolonial theory, queer theory and feminist scholarship.

Throughout this project, it is important for me to continually consider the ways that my own positionality as a non-Black and non-Indigenous person has informed this study's particular interest in how conditions of violence are connected to larger processes of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism. Having a white, Italian-American father and a second-generation Mexican-American mother, I identify as a cis-gender woman who is multi-ethnic, and of Mexican and Italian heritage. My critique of the U.S as a settler colonial and capitalist nation-state is also informed by my position and privilege as a generational U.S citizen. Interrogating my own positionality throughout this work has pushed me to question what assumptions I may be making, especially in my attempts to refrain from making generalizations about the role of love, and the differences between struggles of liberation, emancipation and sovereignty which are not all synonymous or universal (Grande, 2004; Ray, Randolph, Underhill & Luke, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Another aspect that personally draws me to this work has been informed by queer, Chicana feminist, and Black feminist epistemologies. As someone who has struggled to define my sexuality (mostly due to the politics of bisexuality and pan-sexuality) scholars of queer theory, Chicana feminism and Black feminism have largely guided my interests

in exploring theories of embodied knowledge and the politics of emotions (Ahmed, 2012; Anzaldúa, 2012; Chaudhry, 2019; Cruz, 2001; hooks, 2000).

Additionally, my particular interest in critical pedagogy and contexts of violence in schooling is largely informed by my own experiences in Title I schools within the Sparks, Nevada area. While these schools were spaces that fostered good memories, they were also paired with significant school policing, and gun violence. My K-12 schooling experiences were largely informed by significant increases in school shootings throughout the nation. One memory in particular that stays with me was a school shooting at my middle school that occurred two years after I started high school, where a student and former teacher that I knew were both killed. This was a significant and traumatic event in my community, and has shaped my personal perspectives and feelings on violence. While school shootings are not the specific focus of this research, gun violence and state-sanctioned violence are. It is my hope that my work will contribute to urgent conversations about historically informed conditions of violence that move beyond reformist approaches.

Chapter 2: *Theoretical Framework and Literature Review*

My theoretical investigation of radical love within the context of critical pedagogy and as a foundational force for collective commitments to liberatory struggles is grounded in two main conceptual frameworks. This chapter will examine conceptual frameworks of coloniality and critiques of neoliberalism to develop an understanding of the current context of lovelessness and violence experienced by racialized and marginalized communities within the U.S. These two conceptual frameworks will also allow me to further understand the notion of radical love and how colonial and neoliberal logics both inform and distort engagement with liberatory and transformative projects. I will then provide an overview of relevant literature on radical love, outlining how it has been conceptualized across the social sciences, humanities, and critical education.

Theoretical Framework

Coloniality

Beginning with coloniality, this theory offers an understanding of the current and historic global social, political, and economic context that ourselves and notions like radical love are constantly entangled within. Both Aníbal Quijano (2000) and Frantz Fanon (1963) offer important perspectives in recognizing colonialism as an ongoing process that continues to inform contemporary relations of racial and economic domination that have been historically maintained. Aníbal Quijano (2000) offers the notion “coloniality of power” to describe a global model of power that encompasses physical, material, cultural, and psychological forms of domination. Quijano identifies two primary historical foundations for this model of power which include a colonial

racial hierarchy, and a global capitalist structure formed by the exploitation of labor and natural resources. He argues that race—and the European racial hierarchy that is embedded within race—was, and continues to be fundamental to the colonial process.

Through understanding race as foundational in legitimizing colonial domination, Quijano insists that capitalism is inseparable from racial domination and should be considered a racial project established by European racial hierarchies. Similarly, Frantz Fanon (1963) conceptualizes the capitalist system as intimately informed by colonial structures which ultimately operate as a racial system. Through examining the logic and persistent occurrence of colonial violence, Fanon argues that colonial logics and epistemologies reflect the foundations of racial hierarchies and structures imposed by colonizers. Both scholars theorize colonialism as more than a singular historical event or linear process; they assert that colonialism is an ongoing legacy that continues to inform present global forms of social, political, and economic violence. In addition to these forms of violence, Fanon (1963) critiques ongoing realities of imperialism and colonialism that are not only physically harmful, but psychologically as well.

For Fanon, decolonization is a different organization of human relations that departs dramatically from the violent colonial project, which he insists is an essential tool of liberation, especially in reorganizing the colonized psyche. According to De Lissovoy (2010), decolonial theory is “concerned with confronting, challenging, and undoing the dominative and assimilative force of colonialism as a historical and contemporary process and the cultural and epistemological Eurocentrism that underwrites it” (p. 280). Since colonial logics are multidimensional, reaching for the physical, corporeal and

epistemological domination of peoples, decolonization is crucial in recognizing our own complex internalization of white supremacy and other colonial logics while also aiming to actively transform external structures and practices that perpetuate relations of domination.

Quijano's theory of coloniality and Fanon's analysis of colonial violence and decolonial struggle ultimately challenge deeply rooted Eurocentric perspectives of history and knowledge that distort the role of power and its intimate relationship to colonialism, race, and capitalism. While both theories are written in two different temporal, spatial and historical contexts, grounding this research in an understanding of coloniality, along with its foundation of capitalist economic structures and racial ideologies, is necessary in understanding our current moment of social and political unrest within the U.S context.

Settler Colonialism

A key dimension to ongoing decolonial struggles is the process of settler colonialism which is important to consider given that my investigation is contextualized within the U.S. Settler colonial structures have historically (and continue to) displace and erase Indigenous peoples both physically and epistemologically. Morgensen (2013) argues that white supremacist settler colonialism functions within a biopolitics that sustains settler states as well as naturalizes their power over indigenous communities and nations globally. Mirroring the universalization of Western law within a context of coloniality, these biopolitics portray settler states as inherent and natural processes. In his call to denaturalize settler colonialism, Morgensen (2013) states that settler colonialism "directly informs past and present processes of European colonisation, global capitalism,

liberal modernity and international governance” (p.53). Settler colonialism is continuously normalized through institutional practices, and is constantly reproduced through various narratives and discourses (Calderón, 2014). This can be seen within education where the dominant curriculum actively upholds the U.S as a settler-colonial nation-state (Tuck & Fernández, 2013).

Many scholars who call for active disruption of settler colonialism within any decolonial project contend that critical discourses based in Western epistemologies, such as multiculturalism or critical race theory, tend to neglect the centrality of decolonizing settler colonial ideologies and structures (Calderon, 2014; Tuck & Fernández, 2013). Within this framework of settler colonialism and decoloniality, liberation cannot be achieved if settler colonial structures, processes and logics continue to thrive. Ultimately, a recognition of settler colonialism as an essential context for decolonial struggle is central to imagining and actively struggling for Indigenous and decolonial futurities beyond coloniality. By grounding my theoretical investigation of radical love within a recognition of the U.S as a settler colonial nation-state, I aim to center indigenous sovereignty and futurity through committing to not convolute or simply exchange Indigenous politics with western theories of liberation.

Neoliberalism

Further than a economic rationality, neoliberalism refers to a social, political and cultural doctrine that calls for a privatized, free market society through various forms of deregulation, defunding of public services, and an emphasis on individuality over social responsibility and commitments (De Lissovoy, Means, & Saltman, 2014; Perez, 2019;

Slater, 2020). While there are many important critiques of neoliberalism, this study will primarily draw from broader critiques of neoliberalism beyond a political and economic rationality. Instead, this study considers the psychological and social neoliberal rationalities that forefront neoliberal reconfigurations of education, as well as subjecthood and human emotions.

i) *Individualism and Neoliberal Education Reform*

In a critique of neoliberalism, Love (2019) asserts that through a neoliberal push for free-market reform, a culture of individualism directly impacts our abilities to maintain a collective concern for the common good. Given the unwavering individualism that neoliberalism insists upon, we must consider the long-term impacts of neoliberal educational values, such as individualism, on students' concern for social welfare. Saltman (2014) describes how neoliberal education reform not only commodifies students through privatization, but significantly undermines "the autonomy of teachers to link knowledge to public and critical issues and to help students theorize particular experiences and contexts in ways that would facilitate political agency and public life" (Saltman, 2014, p. 252).

Through neoliberal hyper-individualism, students are restricted in engaging with critical issues and the freedom to think critically within their classrooms. Neoliberal individualism "offers no language for understanding how the future might be grasped outside the narrow logic of the market" (Giroux, 2008 p.59). Not only does a neoliberal ethic of individualism disrupt collective engagement with social justice, it distorts complex, multidimensional violences, such as racism, through emphasizing market

ideologies that reduce these complex violences to private, individual issues (Giroux, 2008). Through understanding social problems as caused by individual choices rather than structural factors, deeply profound and historic practices of racism are then seen as individual problems, ignoring its institutional and structural forms (De Lissovoy, 2015; Goldberg, 2009). Within the context of ongoing social injustices, neoliberal individualization of responsibility distorts collective engagements in resisting marginalizing structures, policies and practices (De Lissovoy, 2015). This poses serious challenges to critically-oriented and transformative educational projects that are fueled by both collective commitments and engagements with resisting and struggling for liberation against every dimension of violence, from physical to epistemological, ontological and more.

ii) *Ontological dimensions of Neoliberalism*

Given the urgency of globalization and neoliberal policies on the livelihoods of marginalized peoples, it is necessary to ground this research in an understanding of neoliberalism as more than an economic doctrine, but as a force that attempts to organize and define human relationships and ways of being (De Lissovoy, 2018). Noah De Lissovoy has examined the psychological and emotional dimensions of neoliberalism which house important insights into how these corporeal dimensions complicate engagement with revolutionary projects. Drawing from the Lacanian tradition, De Lissovoy (2018) examines the notion of *drive* and *desire* as two concepts that reflect the psychoanalytical dimensions of neoliberalism. The impulse of *drive* reflects the capitalist logic of domination through small and temporary pleasures gifted through consumerism

and communicative capitalism. While *drive* only provides a temporary satisfaction, *desire* reflects a larger, more long-term revolutionary project which exceeds the predatory compulsions of neoliberalism. The notion of *drive* also reflects the simulated agency that a neoliberal subject receives as a result of giving up *desire* such as “a consumer choosing among products, a parent choosing among charters, a young person choosing a persona on social media, or even an activist choosing among local interventions” (De Lissovoy, 2018 p.197). In terms of critical education, the co-opting of temporary ‘social-justice’ engagements or apolitical calls for solidarity through *drive* poses significant challenges to collective, committed and critical emancipatory projects. Ultimately, De Lissovoy (2018) calls for a new pedagogical subject and project that radically resists persistent, individualistic, and entrepreneurial neoliberal compulsions. Drawing from this conceptual framework will be helpful in analyzing the ways that neoliberalism reorganizes subjectivity to further complicate people’s engagement with *desire*. For the purpose of this study, the notion of radical love reflects the same revolutionary spirit as *desire* and poses fundamental challenges to the short, apolitical compulsions of *drive*.

Literature Review

The notion of radical love has been theorized in a myriad of disciplines and scholarship from the Black feminist tradition to critical education, sociology, geography and more. While radical love has been theorized in many different spaces, it is not always referred to as *radical* love. Therefore, this literature review will consider notions of radical love that are labeled differently across scholarship. I will begin by outlining the primary themes that distinguish a radical form of love from more traditional and

dominant depictions of love. This will help in understanding the guiding principles that make up radical love across different scholarly traditions. In order to begin understanding the common founding principles of radical forms of love, we must first examine dominant depictions of love, and how they have provided a point of departure for critical scholars to define how radical forms of love are different from traditional, neoliberal, and patriarchal notions of “love.”

Love, Feminist Orientations and Affective Politics

Outside of some critical scholarship within the social sciences and humanities, analyses of love have been limited and marginalized within research and scholarship due to patriarchal notions of emotions, where love is specifically associated with being irrational or too feminine (Matias & Allen, 2016). Not only do patriarchal notions of love challenge the validity of research around love in various disciplines because of its perceived ‘irrationality,’ these dominant notions also confine love to a ‘feminized’ topic associated with private spaces and individual feelings or affection (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014; Reyes et.al, 2018). In western thought, emotions more broadly are associated with the body, and therefore the feminine, further dismissing research on love for topics that are more associated with rationality and reason (Morrison, Johnston, & Longhurst, 2013). This is mirrored with the Cartesian dichotomy of the mind/body, where the mind—which is associated with theory, intellect, rationality—is positioned as more valid and valuable in research than the body which is often dismissed for its association with lived experience (Cruz, 2001). Similarly, the private/public dichotomy also provides significant context to how love has been theorized, or lack thereof because of emotions’

restriction to the private sphere. In her “Toward an epistemology of a brown body,” educational researcher Cindy Cruz (2001) points to how the stories of women of color are considered “too corporeal, too colored, and sometimes too queer to be considered publishable” (p. 659). Furthermore, the restriction of emotions to only the personal conceals the larger systematic effects of emotions (Ahmed, 2012).

This exclusion of experiential, embodied and corporal knowledge as a recognized and legitimate point of research and inquiry allows us to further understand the ways that love has been most potently theorized in disciplines that are already positioned outside of dominant discourses that are hyper-fixated on ‘rationality.’ However, an affective turn in critical theory that challenges the boundaries between the public/private and mind/body, such as scholarship dedicated to exploring the intersections of global politics and lived affective experiences, has been mostly widely taken up among feminist scholarship (Cvetkovich, 2007), and more specifically women of color (Ahmed, 2012; Nash, 2011).

In her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2012) Sara Ahmed explores the complex relationship between violence, power and emotions. She examines the ways that affective politics inform the ways that emotions work as political forces to produce social conditions that vary for different bodies that are contingent on socio-historical contexts. For example, Ahmed argues that love is conditional, referring to the varying conditions of love, such as who can comfortably exist within a nation-state like the U.S, and whose body causes a disturbance. Through a shifting focus and appreciation of embodied knowledge and affective politics, patriarchal and neoliberal associations of love as feminine, private, irrational, individualistic, have been used as grounding points of

critique where critical scholars have departed from.

While discourses on love can be found throughout different points of time and geographic locations, the recentering of critically-oriented conceptions of love can be most significantly traced to the Black feminist tradition (Chaudhry, 2019; Matias & Allen, 2016; Moore, 2018). Though largely unexamined, Nash (2011) draws on second wave feminism in order to highlight how the sustained call for the centrality of love within Black feminist projects has continued to inform contemporary scholarship, such as the work of bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins. Drawing from second wave Black feminist scholarship, such as the work of the Combahee River Collective, Nash (2011) argues that a Black feminist love-politic is a tradition of affective politics distinguished by the movement of love beyond the personal, to a theory of justice informed by politics and collective action. While love-politics is not only found within second wave Black feminist scholarship, it continues to be significant within contemporary politically-oriented theorizations of love across disciplines. Given the significance of feminist scholarship, particularly the work of Black feminism in theorizing love as a valid, crucial, and collective affective politic, we can further understand the need for a *radical* form of love that is distinguished from neoliberal and masculinist depictions.

Love as Collective and Political

A key dimension to radical forms of love across critical theory involves the conception of love as an overt political force against all forms of domination. When it comes to both contemporary and political theorizations of love, one of the most widely cited scholars across disciplines is bell hooks. hooks (1994) insists on considering the

political dimensions of love, and argues that an ethic of love is crucial in shaping political visions in order to resist remaining complicit within systems of domination. hooks (2003) conceptualizes love as an essential force in collectively overcoming domination in all forms. While hooks weaves a theory of love throughout her scholarship (1994, 1995, 2003, 2004), her book *All about love* (2000) is most frequently cited among discourses of love in the fields of social sciences, humanities and education. In this book, hooks asserts that “all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic” (p. xvii). hooks (2000) positions love as a crucial component to social movements and explores the ways that love is communicated through care, respect, responsibility, commitment and trust.

In his discussion of Black radical love, scholar and activist Darnell L. Moore (2018) draws on hooks’ (2000) theorization of a political and collective love through insisting that love is at the root of Black resistance and collective struggle. He states that Black radical love is not a neoliberal approach to love such as an “affect turned into a commodity emptied of meaning, vulnerability, and the power it brings about,” but is rather deeply political and central to a shaping a Black politic focused on protecting Black life and disentangling systems and practices of dominations that perpetuate conditions lovelessness through racism, misogyny, elitism, homophobia, transphobia, and other violences (p.325-326). This discourse of radical love entailing the explicit denouncing and resisting of dominative structures and practices is closely related to discussions surrounding empty or false forms of caring.

Unlike what some liberal-humanist, or individualistic notions of love would

suggest, hooks (2000, 2003) insists that there is no space for love when domination is present. While care is a dimension of love, hooks (2000) argues that simply caring does not mean that we are engaging in love. This can be exemplified with empty practices of love, such as *aesthetic* caring or false hope, where a more powerful member of a relationship (such as a ‘traditional’ teacher-student dynamic) defines themselves as caring while engaging in ahistorical and depoliticized forms of optimism that denies and/or ignores ongoing suffering and inequality (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999).

Radical Love in Education

While the politics of emotions and affect have not been thoroughly explored in critical pedagogy (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014) this section will review how radical notions of love have been most significantly conceptualized among critical education scholars. Scholars of education have theorized similar notions of radical love such as *radical healing* (Ginwright, 2009; Hicks Peterson, 2018) *radical hope* (Gannon, 2020) *critical hope* (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) among others. While these concepts differ in their specific focuses, they are not mutually exclusive and rather share similar core characteristics of radical love, such as being contextual, collective and deeply political.

In the field of education, particularly critical pedagogy, explorations of political and collective forms of love in pedagogical projects and practices have been largely influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1994, 2005). Freire’s (1970) notion of “armed love” which Daniels (2012) describes as “a strongly critical, political and activist stance that involves a deep social awareness of injustice” is the foundation of any

commitment to both resisting and changing conditions of oppression through transformative and liberatory education (p.10). Freire's "armed love" is intimately embedded throughout his revolutionary vision of education and liberation, and is especially present in his theorization of critical pedagogy. Beyond a theory of teaching or learning, critical pedagogy is both a tradition and educational movement that is rooted in an ethic of love and commitment to others and their liberation through the forefronting of praxis-oriented education (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). Tethered to the practice of critical pedagogy is a commitment and faithfulness to a global project of emancipation, grounded by "a profound love for the world and for people—the love from which a revolutionary praxis of dialogue and solidarity emerge" (Darder, 2002, p. 79).

Several critical education scholars (Daniels, 2012; Darder, 2002; De Lissovoy, 2010; Lanas & Zembylas, 2014; Liston & Garrison, 2004) have attempted to further theorize the central role of love in transformative education and critical pedagogy. Starting from an understanding that schools operate as spaces that systematically perpetrate hegemonic ideologies that create social and psychological conditions of lovelessness, critical education scholars have pointed to the vital importance of re-humanizing educational discourse and practices (Daniels, 2012; Matias & Allen, 2016). In her book *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A pedagogy of love* Freirian scholar Antonia Darder (2002) calls for a pedagogy of love that expands on Freire's notion of "armed love" that can ultimately fuel transformative work in school, communities and society. Given our contemporary neoliberal context, Darder argues that teachers must become cognizant of the pervasive conditions of alienation and exclusion that are

inextricably linked to ongoing colonial legacies. Drawing on Freire's notion of a radical love, Darder (2002) writes:

A pedagogy of love must encompass a deep unwavering commitment to social inclusion and economic democracy—a revolutionary commitment to release our humanity from the powerful death grip of capitalism and to dismantle the coloniality of power that persists today. (p.79)

Darder's pedagogy of love defies colonial and capitalist logics, and fuels a collective commitment to liberation. Other education scholars have attempted to further theorize what a pedagogy of love would look like within the context of contemporary schooling. Moving from the alienation of marginalized students and towards a pedagogy of radical love (Lake, 2016) is a deeply political process that is reciprocated by both teachers and students with the goal of changing the context of oppression (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). As a form of praxis, radical love demands a recognition and active critique of current relations of power and epistemic violence, while simultaneously building non-dominative and *loving* relationships, making it deserving of more attention in critical education (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014). In addition to a necessary pedagogical practice, Matias & Allen (2016) argue that in order to even support a radical form of love in schools, there needs to first be a consideration of school curriculum because of the ways that dominant curriculum produces a false love of whiteness in the sense that this 'love' is rooted in unequal social, political and economic privileges.

In *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach* (2005), Freire draws on his title asserting that to *dare* to teach is to have the courage to commit to not

only loving one's students, but the political and ethical process implied in teaching. Without taking away from the joys and meaningfulness of teaching, Freire (2005) and Darder (2002) make it clear that teaching is also a rigorous process, one where teachers must have the courage to fight for the restoration of humanity beyond the constraints of domination. While revolutionary philosophies, such as the work of Freire have been adopted by many teacher education programs, McLaren (2005) cautions against a watered-down, capitalist-friendly adaptation of the radical politics that are foundational to Freire's texts. What is at the core of radical notions of love is the uncompromising prioritization and commitment to marginalized peoples and communities, and the social and political projects which actual livelihoods are tied to. Radical love cannot be without radical commitments to liberation, the explicit critique of epistemic and global violence, and the ending of all forms of domination.

Conclusion: Where to go from here

Despite certain aspects of radical love having been explored by some education scholars—such as its grounding characteristics and significance given both contemporary and historical contexts—there is still a need for deeper theorizations and explicit discussions about the meaning and role of a radical love within critical education (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014; Matias & Allen, 2016). For instance, while critical education scholars have explored radical love within the past decade in relation to curriculum, (Matias & Allen, 2016) teaching (Cervantes-Soon, 2017; Daniels, 2012; Lanas & Zembylas, 2014) and teacher education (Lake, 2016; Reyes et.al, 2018), there has been little exploration

into the specific role of radical love and the ways it can be central to resisting logics of coloniality.

Additionally, while some scholars have recognized the significance of radical love within a context of coloniality, the role of colonial and neoliberal logics in *complicating* or *obscuring* engagement with radical love within critical pedagogy has not been largely explored. For instance, critical education scholars have drawn on critiques of neoliberalism in order to contextualize the alienating conditions that neoliberal logics perpetuate within schooling contexts (Darder, 2002; Matias & Allen, 2016; Slater, 2020); however, there has been limited consideration to the relationship between temporary and apolitical neoliberal compulsions, such as the appropriation of liberatory knowledge and practices through liberal “multicultural” education, and the ways that these compulsions complicate meaningful and transformative engagements with radical love. While this process of moving away from alienation to radical practices in education is an ongoing process for both students and teachers (Lake, 2016), we must further examine how adopting a political radical love pedagogy can produce a complex revolutionary spirit that is not exempt from being influenced by individualistic, compulsory and market-based neoliberal rational.

Lastly, there is also a need to further consider the relationship between radical love and decoloniality specifically. According to Figueroa (2015), decolonial love is what motivates the work of decolonization as a political and social project, and is central to being able to imagine a radical reparation of the modern colonial world. Similar to radical love, decolonial love is a form of love that is historically aware and is rooted in a

willingness to take action. However, decolonial love imagines a transformative and reparative future specifically through the disempowerment of coloniality (Figueroa, 2015). In this framework, liberation cannot be achieved if settler colonial structures, processes and logics continue to thrive. Ultimately, decolonial love is central to both imagining and actively struggling for Indigenous and decolonial futurities beyond coloniality. Tuck & Yang (2012) write that decolonization “is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of ‘helping’ the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes” (p. 21). Rather, they argue that decolonization is inextricably committed to *Indigenous* sovereignty and futurity. What needs to be further explored, is whether or not a politically charged and liberatory concept like radical love can allow space to simultaneously center decolonial projects, or if it requires its own term such as decolonial love. What should also be considered is if these two terms are mutually exclusive, or if they compliment, challenge, and/or inform each other.

. Chapter 3: *Methodology*

As detailed in the previous chapters, this study is interested in the role of radical love as a foundational source for collective commitments, liberatory pedagogical projects, and social movements/struggles. This study is also interested in the limitations that colonial and neoliberal logics of domination and alienation pose for engaging with these liberatory commitments. With consideration to these interests, I will conduct a textual analysis of three texts where I will identify key themes that emerge from my close reading of each text. I will then interrogate these key themes through the lens of my theoretical framework which includes coloniality/decoloniality, settler colonialism, and critiques of neoliberalism, as well as my research questions which are as follows:

- 1) What is radical love, and what is its relationship to critical pedagogy?
- 2) How do colonial and capitalist logics complicate or obscure educators/students/community members from authentically engaging in radical love?
- 3) How can radical love deepen our understanding of contemporary social movements and struggles against violence, and critical educational contexts. More specifically, what does radical love look like in the present context of social and political unrest, including the Black Lives Matter movement?

Drawing on these research questions for overall guidance in analyzing each text, I will first examine Paulo Freire's *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* with a primary consideration of my first research question, Sara Ahmed's *The*

Cultural Politics of Emotion with my second question, and Bettina Love's *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* with my third. While examining each text, I will specifically search for emerging themes through considering the following questions:

- 1) How does the author understand the role/significance of emotions in their investigation?
- 2) How do forms of radical love emerge from this text? In what ways is it conveyed, either explicitly or implicitly in the text?
- 3) How does the author conceptualize the role of coloniality and or neoliberalism in their text?

These questions will help me locate the key themes in the text as they pertain to my core research questions. Once I identify several key themes in the text, I will draw on relevant quotes and examples from the text to help structure my analysis.

Chapter 4: *Textual Analysis*

Part I. Radical Love and Critical Pedagogy: Exploring Radical Foundations of Love

In Paulo Freire's *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*

(2005)

As one of the first widely recognized founders of critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire's body of work embodies a humanist pedagogy that has been grounded in a radical politics of liberation (Giroux 2002; McLaren, 2000). Freire is among the first globally recognized philosophers, theorists, and educators who have been committed to critically examining the relationship between education, politics, imperialism, and capitalism (McLaren, 2000). Some of Freire's most identifiable contributions that are notably connected to his legacy include the role of dialogue, the banking model of education, codification, praxis, and conscientization. Communicated through these contributions is Freire's commitment to understanding and upholding of the empowering, democratic and liberatory potential of education. Although Freire's texts are very much rooted in the Brazilian social and historical context that he was living in, his work continues to be welcomed and adopted on a global scale.

In *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* (2005), Freire concentrates his focus on the role and responsibility of teachers and teaching. With this text, Freire focuses on challenging educators to critically reflect on the meaning of teaching and learning. Through several "letters" to teachers, Freire specifically outlines the various responsibilities of educators as human subjects existing within a social

context entangled with oppressive conditions. Throughout his philosophical exploration of what it means to be an educator, there are several prominent themes that pertain to my investigation of radical love, these include teachers as cultural and political workers, teaching as a profession, and the centrality of emotions in teaching.

Teachers as Cultural and Political Workers

Freire (2005) contends that educational spaces do not operate separately from the outside world, but rather they exist within larger social and political contexts that are influenced by various forms of cultural and historical conditions. He argues that conditions of oppression are products of hegemonic social, political, economic, cultural, historical, and ideological structures. According to Freire, both teaching and learning processes do not occur separately from these larger contexts, leading teachers to engage in politics (whether intentionally or unintentionally) when they teach. He argues that “Teachers do not live in a pristine world devoid of ideology, of racism, of social classes, but rather they live as social and political agents” (Freire, 2005 p.20). For Freire, responsible teachers cannot separate their pedagogy from the realities of the students they teach, especially the material conditions, cultural identities and histories that inform the experiences of marginalized students in particular. In this sense, teachers are cultural workers because they have the responsibility of engaging with students in the learning process with a critical understanding of how larger social conditions shape the cultural being of students. For example, he states:

We cannot stop taking into consideration the unfavorable material conditions that many students of schools in marginalized areas of the city experience: the precariousness of their living quarters, the deficiency of their food... the violence and death that they know almost intimately...All this undeniably affects the cultural being of these children (Freire, 2005 p. 89)

When taking the social conditions and lived experiences of marginalized students seriously, educators engage in teaching with critical knowledge about the social, cultural, political and economic conditions that inform students' contexts. Not only are teachers cultural workers, they are also political agents in the sense that the education process not only has political significance, but teachers themselves have a responsibility in participating in transforming unjust conditions of society.

Part of the responsibility of teachers, as political agents, is resisting the notion that teaching can be summed up to an "object" or "neutral" practice which would further ignore the existence of political and social conditions that directly impact both students and teachers. In trying to deny this reality "we preserve the status quo" (Freire, 2005 p.62). For Freire, this complicity is especially crucial to address in teachers because of the cultural and political significance of their work. Different from dominative traditions of education where education is seen as a neutral and apolitical practice, Freire (2005) centers his message on insisting that teachers are both cultural workers and political agents, leading them to be irrevocably influenced by the social, cultural, and historical conditions of the context in which they teach, and furthermore *who* they teach:

Let's repeat, then, that the educator is a politician. In consequence, it is absolutely necessary that educators act in a way consistent with their choice—which is political—and furthermore that educators be ever more scientifically competent, which teaches them how important it is to know the concrete world in which their students live (p.84)

Although it is not explicit in Freire's (2005) discussion of teachers as political agents, we can see components of radical love emerge from these framings of teaching as a political practice, such as Freire's (1970) understanding of critical pedagogy, which is rooted in both a theory of love and a commitment to other people and their liberation from all forms of oppression. With this understanding in mind, Cervantes-Soon (2017) argues that “radical love requires an explicit critical pedagogy orientation” (p. 165) where love is communicated in the classroom through a clear pedagogical commitment to struggle for the social and political transformation of oppressive conditions. However, educators who are unaware of, or are *unwilling* to engage in the political nature of their job will likely be unable to counter the “the fragmented hegemonic frameworks and rationales established by state and district officials” (Darder, 2002, p. 66). Thus, a political ethic of love is necessary in both motivating a critical and revolutionary praxis of education, and in combating the deeply ingrained rationales that support systems of domination.

Through establishing non-dominative relationships with students, beginning with a historically informed critique and critical awareness of the material realities of marginalized students, teachers engage with radical love through forefronting this reality

rather than ignoring it. A key distinction here in Freire's more radical understanding of the responsibility of teachers compared to a liberal "progressive" understanding is not only an awareness and willingness to critique these disparate material realities, but a firm commitment to *participating* in a more long-term project of social transformation. He details this idea further when considering the context of fighting for fundamental changes within Brazilian society:

Progressive educators need to convince themselves that they are not only teachers— this doesn't exist— not only teaching specialists. We are political militants because we are teachers. Our job is not exhausted in the teaching of math, geography, syntax, history. Our job implies that we teach these subjects with sobriety and competence, but it also requires our involvement in and dedication to overcoming social injustice. (p.73)

It is through this critical competence, active involvement, and dedication to overcoming social injustice that educators are engaging with a radical love. This offers us an alternate perspective that pushes us beyond liberal approaches to social justice education that may only hold a desire for change, and an apolitical "love" for students. Freire argues that while a *desire* for social transformation is fundamental, it is not enough. Rather, Freire is explicit in his call for teachers as political agents to be willing to fight collectively and strategically. Freire's description of teachers as political militants demonstrates the seriousness implicated in the phrase 'political agents,' along with the call for action, commitment, and motivation that is implicit in it.

Teaching as a Profession

The second key theme that emerges from this text, is Freire's depiction of teaching as a profession beyond a neoliberal framing of professionalism, such as an individualistic market-driven focus, measured in value by the profession's proximity to wealth, competition, and participation in the neoliberal organization of society. Within the neoliberal schooling context, professional conduct is expressed through a teacher's ability to efficiently implement measurement and outcomes-based practices within their classroom (De Lissovoy et.al, 2014). Careful to distinguish his interpretation of teaching as a profession from neoliberal-oriented standards, Freire describes his understanding of teaching as a profession through emphasizing the responsibility, complexity, and commitment that teaching demands. For example, he argues:

The teaching task is above all a professional task that requires constant intellectual rigor and the stimulation of epistemological curiosity, of the capacity to love, of creativity, of scientific competence and the rejection of scientific reductionism. The teaching task also requires the capacity to fight for freedom, without which the teaching task becomes meaningless. (p. 28)

The significance that Freire puts on the concept of profession here implicates the foundational, complicated and inspiring work of educators as more than a 'job.' For Freire, teaching as a profession carries a lot of weight; it is a deeply intellectual project that calls teachers to have a desire to engage with both theory and practice, to center their emotions in their craft, and to commit to participating in a long-term struggle of liberation. Central to this quote is also the importance that Freire places on the

epistemological dimensions of teaching. This aspect of Freire's understanding of teaching professionals evokes even more significance when understood within a context of coloniality, specifically through the pervasiveness of eurocentrism as a form of colonial rationality and epistemological domination (Quijano, 2000). When teachers foster an epistemological curiosity, they are able to recognize, question and denaturalize the current hegemonic epistemologies that are embedded within eurocentrism, which is imperative to engaging in a transformative pedagogy (Darder, 2002).

Building off the idea that teachers are political agents, Freire understands the competence of teachers as *professionals* as closely related to an educator's understanding of the broader social and political contexts that influence the lives of both teachers and students. This also implicates a willingness to discuss, address, critique and imagine these social and political contexts *with* students. Different from neoliberal logic, where social relationships—such as those between teachers and students—are reduced to impersonal market-like relationships of supplier and customer (Giroux, 2006), Freire's understanding of teachers as professionals is connected to their responsibility in transgressing power relations within the classroom, so that both parties are seen as mutual human-beings, and Subjects (Cervantes-Soon, 2017). While there is no space for love within a supplier-customer relationship, both love and authentic caring (Valenzuela, 1999) emerge through this mutual process of humanization (Cervantes-Soon, 2017).

In his fourth letter to educators, Freire outlines several indispensable qualities of progressive teachers which include humility, lovingness, courage, tolerance, decisiveness, security, a balance between patience and impatience, and a joy of living. While I will

return to his discussion of lovingness, we are still able to see radical love emerge from Freire's overall discussion of teachers as professionals, especially with his understanding of the various qualities that he views as imperative for teachers. As professionals, Freire holds educators to high expectations because of the significance that is implicated in the nature of teaching. These expectations include (but are not limited to) a respect for others, an understanding that knowledge is co-created, a resistance to elitism, an ability to make decisions outside of an authoritarian approach, a consistency in one's ethical commitments, and an ability to balance the patience needed for participating in long-term liberatory projects, as well as an impatience to combat complicity.

This complex understanding of teaching is not meant to overwhelm teachers with unrealistic expectations, but rather to challenge teachers to take the profession of teaching seriously because of the unique and significant position educators are in. These qualities are implicitly connected to a love ethic through the ways that they contribute to a "pedagogy of love" (Darder, 2002). We can see this with how these qualities contribute to a collective commitment to liberation, specifically by defying colonial and capitalist logics. For example, when educators practice *humility*, both students and teachers are able to co-create and participate in knowledge production, further resisting an elitist culture where namely white educators, or eurocentric knowledge is positioned as the holders of an all encompassing truth. Similarly, when educators embrace a balanced existence within both a state of *patience* and *impatience*, they are able to resist maintaining a complicit and inactive disposition as well as a position that disregards the crucial role of enacting careful and intentional tactics and strategies.

These indispensable qualities are not innate to certain educators, but are rather acquired gradually through practice, suggesting that teachers make choices in their pedagogical approaches that either significantly contribute to the continuation of existing power relations, or that attempt to struggle against it. This point is crucial because the profession of teaching, as well as each of the indispensable qualities that Freire insists should be nurtured in progressive teachers, do not occur naturally. Instead, these qualities are developed through an *intentional* and unwavering recognition of the urgency and sociopolitical significance of teaching. Similarly, engaging in radical love is a choice that is intentionally made (hooks, 2000). For instance, educators *choose* to engage in radical love through their actions, which are irrevocably informed by their political and ethical commitments. When educators choose to forefront these commitments in their pedagogical practices, they not only strengthen their craft as professionals, they also engage in a radical love. Freire's understanding of teaching as a profession, which attempts to convey the complexity, meaningfulness, and depths of teaching, calls for educators to critically consider what their social and political commitments are within the context of ongoing conditions of violence(s). When these commitments are established for the educator, Freire proposes that teachers struggle to strengthen these commitments through their professional craft, which is ultimately informed by a radical love. Not an unconditional, apolitical, or innate love, but a political love that is inextricably tied to transforming relations of domination.

Centrality of Emotions in Teaching

The last theme that I will examine is Freire's centering of emotions at the core of teaching. Along with the political and professional foundations of progressive teaching, the educator's practice goes beyond just a mechanical teaching of content. Rather, Freire (2005) argues that learning processes and ways of knowing are both informed by feelings and emotions. Due to the pressures of dominative schooling practices, which are contingent on a relentless scientism, emotions are not often considered to have a legitimate role in the education process. Freire problematizes the embracing of science as the ultimate truth at the cost of disregarding the legitimacy of embodied knowledge, such as the idea that curricular content can be neutral, universal, and objective through a scientific approach. For instance, Freire asserts that "Content cannot be taught...as if it was a set of things, pieces of knowledge, that can be superimposed on or juxtaposed to the conscious body of the learners. Teaching, learning, and knowing have nothing to do with this mechanistic practice" (p.85). The fear that emotions may ruin the neutral stance of educators—which is the only 'appropriate' way that teachers may exist within a neoliberal, and colonial context—has created a fear around emotional vulnerability and openness within classrooms (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014; Matias & Allen, 2016; Reyes et.al, 2018).

However, Freire (2005) argues that emotional vulnerability should not be feared, and should rather be considered as important as the intellectual and cognitive practices associated with teaching. Exemplifying this, Freire (2005) writes, "Whatever I know I know with my entire self: with my critical mind but also with my feelings, with my intuitions, with my emotions. What I must not do is stop at the level of emotions, of

intuitions...I must never disregard them” (p.49). Because the work of educators is both complex and political as I detailed before, Freire insists that there is a need to closely examine the role of emotions as motivational forces that are foundational to teachers as political agents.

One emotion in particular that Freire highlights is the quality of *lovingness*, which he considers a way of being towards students, as well as essential to the process of teaching itself. While he considers lovingness a necessary quality for progressive educators, Freire (2005) further describes his notion of armed love in order to speak to the precarious conditions of education that can discourage the presence of love in a classroom; “I must confess, not meaning to cavil, that I do not believe educators can survive the negativities of their trade without some sort of “armed love” (p. 58). He positions the need for an “armed love” within the context of external tensions that make this work challenging, such as the presence of persistent social injustices, low-wages, and disregard for the profession of teaching.

An *armed* love (Freire 1970; Freire 2005) attempts to protect those who are participating in a collective struggle for liberation (in various senses of the word) through fostering a willingness and courage to continue fighting (also in various ways, whether overt or covert) in the face of external conditions that pose serious challenges to transforming relations of domination. While other theorizations of love, such as the feminist and Black feminist tradition, have understood love more specifically through the lens of embodied knowledge and affective politics (Ahmed, 2012; Cruz, 2001; hooks, 2000; Nash, 2011), Freire’s (1970, 2005) notion of “armed love” connects to other

understandings of radical love through its differentiation from apolitical, ahistorical and unconditional forms of love (hooks, 1994; hooks, 2000; hooks, 2003; Nash, 2011). For example, Freire's (2005) notion of armed love points most distinctly to the intimate relationship between love, politics and struggle:

It is indeed necessary, however, that this love be an "armed love," the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce. It is this form of love that is indispensable to the progressive educator and that we must all learn. It so happens, however, that this lovingness I speak about, the dream for which I fight and for whose realization I constantly prepare myself, demands that I invent in myself, in my social experience, another quality: courage, to fight and to love. (p.58)

Freire is firm in his stance that teaching requires a strong love ethic and emotional openness. However, his notion of "armed love" suggests that this form of love is intentional. As I discussed earlier, engaging in radical love is an intentional choice that is communicated through one's actions. As an intentional emotion and practice, "armed love" challenges empty claims to love that maintain the innateness or unconditionality of love. In addition to "armed love," Freire argues for a careful consideration of the role of emotions in influencing ways of knowing, as well as motivating fidelity to greater social and political projects. While we can consider Freire's "armed love" as a radical form of love, it can still be deepened by a more explicit centering of decoloniality, such as with Figueroa's (2015) notion of decolonial love, where love is intrinsically connected to transforming oppressive conditions that are entangled with a colonial matrix of power.

Additionally, while Freire's "armed love" fuels liberatory social and political projects, a more explicit consideration of how love is connected to the disentangling of homophobia, transphobia, and a global anti-blackness (Moore, 2018) would strengthen the power and precision of radical love.

Conclusion

After reviewing several key themes within Freire's (2005) *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, there are a few significant takeaways that emerge that help answer my first research question, "what is radical love, and what is its relationship to critical pedagogy?" Firstly, Freire's assertion that teachers are both cultural workers and political agents allows us to consider the political implications of education, such as the ways that broader socio-political conditions emanate into classrooms. Teachers engage with both a radical and armed love through a critical and historical awareness of ongoing disparaging social conditions, and a fierce dedication to participate in transforming them. Freire's understanding of teaching as a profession also helps us examine not only the importance of teaching, but the complex ways that teachers are capable of contributing to larger projects of social transformation through their willingness to confront, critique and imagine the future of these social and political contexts *with* students.

Implicit in each of the themes that I discussed is the role of choice and its relation to radical love. Considering the role of choice in these themes allows us to examine how engaging in armed love, as well as accepting one's role as a political agent (and subsequently a professional) within a classroom are all intentional acts. Implicated in the word *radical* in 'radical love' is a firm, uncompromising commitment to social and

political projects that struggle to transformation of all forms of violence. Since radical love is communicated through actions and political commitments to social transformation, empty claims to love are more easily distinguished and identified. In this vein, Freire insists that the work of progressive teachers—as *professionals*, cultural workers, and political agents—is a radical practice that should not be co-opted by an oversimplification of this work, which happens frequently within neoliberal understandings of teaching, where teachers are reduced to “readily exploitable middle managers and...disciplined rudimentary laborers” (De Lissovoy et.al, 2014, p.47) who are to provide services, not encourage critical questioning, or a passion to fight, or *love*.

Given the pervasiveness of neoliberal market ideology, Giroux (2006) argues that it’s ability to insert itself into every avenue of social life makes it “easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of neoliberal capitalism” (p. 22). However, through taking Freire’s (2005) understanding of the political, cultural and emotional dynamics of teaching as well as the robust responsibility of teachers, we can begin to further uncover the false reality of neoliberalism, where market ideology attempts to dictate and define the conditions of relationships and sociality. Radical love is a force that we must take seriously because it is implicated throughout Freire’s (2005) philosophy of teaching, learning and transforming. We can understand the notion of radical love as intentional, and communicated through action, regardless of how overt or covert these actions are. The centrality of love in the teaching and the learning process challenges us to rethink not only the responsibility of teachers, but our own understanding of our role in collectively

supporting teachers and their craft, as well as our responsibility in grounding our political commitments in a firm and unyielding ethic of love.

Part II. Love and the Nation: A look into colonial, capitalist and radical conditions of love in Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2012)

Through Freire's (2005) theorization of the emotional and transformative dimensions of teaching, we have a greater understanding for the role of radical expressions of love that are implicated within a critical pedagogical context. In this sense, radical love is expressed through educators' willingness to commit to taking on the deeply political responsibility implicated within the profession of teaching. However, given our specific context within the U.S as a settler-colonial and capitalist nation-state, it is important to consider the ways that colonial and capitalist logics implicate themselves within constructions of love, and how understanding the politics of love is crucial to engaging radical forms of love.

As a scholar of feminist, queer and race studies, Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2012) investigates the role of politics in deciding who has the right to claim that they are acting out of love, and who is deemed as being *against* love. She closely examines the conditions of love and what it means to love by standing alongside some, meanwhile being against others. Ahmed's complication of love offers us an important consideration into the role of love, and provides insight into how we may begin to identify colonial or capitalist logics that complicate how we engage with, and theorize radical love. Through problematizing claims to speaking or acting *in the name of love*, Ahmed (2012) outlines how love becomes a way of connecting with others in relation to an ideal. She examines how love is "crucial to how individuals become aligned with collectives through their identification with an ideal, an alignment that relies on the

existence of others who have failed that ideal” (p.124). While radical notions of love are largely defined by collective commitments, Ahmed raises consideration to how love is used to not only establish collective commitments around an ideal, but how these forms of collectives are contingent on creating conditions and boundaries of love. Ahmed’s investigation of the cultural politics of emotions, and love in particular, point to several key themes that will contribute to our understanding of how colonial and capitalist logics complicate authentic engagements with radical love. Beginning with understanding the conditions of love, we will explore how these conditions represent forms of market logic of investment and commodification. We will then explore her understanding of ‘multicultural love’ and how this form of love may uncover the ways that whiteness is centered within ‘progressive’ spaces. Finally, we will consider how radical love is implicated within Ahmed’s framework of conditional love.

National Ideals and Investments in Love

In the chapter “In the name of love,” Ahmed questions, who is deserving of love? And further, who is seen as an impediment to love? Through analyzing the way that love functions within a social, political and historical context, Ahmed primarily examines what it means for a nation to be considered an object of love, such as how some have “love” for their country. In this sense, one’s love for a nation is measured by their proximity to the national ideal. Ahmed’s analysis of the cultural politics of love through a focus on the role of a nation as an object of love will be useful in considering how notions like radical love should not be overly-idealized, but rather understood within a specific social context.

When considering the national ideals of a settler colonial, capitalist, and imperial nation, such as the U.S, it is important to consider the ways that white supremacy, rigid individualism, and the maintenance of capitalist interests reflect how the national ideal is defined, along with determining which bodies do and do not reflect the nation's ideals. Ahmed (2012) argues that “the nation is a concrete effect of how some bodies have moved towards and away from other bodies, a movement that works to create boundaries and borders, and the ‘approximation’ of what we can now call ‘national character’ (what the nation *is like*)” (p.133). Such an investment of love in the nation (and its ideals) can be rewarded once those who are seen as obstacles to making the nation great, either assimilate or are removed. The national ideal, especially in the context of the U.S, is reliant on the existence of outsiders and ‘others’ whose presence threatens the nation.

Ahmed contends that love for a nation is more about the creation of boundaries and borders that separate those who embody the national ideal from those who don't. Considering the context of the UK, Ahmed demonstrates how national ideals demand that ‘outsiders,’ such as migrants, embody the national ideal through language, cultural cues, and other indicators. Those who fail or refuse to accept the national ideal are perceived to be *against* or threats to the nation. For Ahmed, to be *against* the nation is to disrupt the investments of committed citizens, causing visceral feelings of injury and disturbance. For instance, as citizens give their love to the nation (through labor, taxes, voting for policies that will work to achieve or maintain the national ideal), they actively invest in the nation's ability to return this investment through providing conditions to ‘a good life.’ However, the ability for this return investment to come to fruition is limited within a

capitalist society. Ahmed (2012) further illustrates how this logic works to strengthen investments in the nation, despite the nation's inability to return this investment:

the failure of the nation to 'give back' the subject's love works to increase the investment in the nation. The subject 'stays with' the nation, despite the absence of return and the threat of violence, as leaving would mean recognising that the investment of national love over a lifetime has brought no value...One keeps loving rather than recognising that the love that one has given has not and will not be returned (p.131)

Here, we can observe the role of market logic in how love operates when the nation is the object of love within a capitalist context. As this investment of love in the nation increases, so do the visceral emotions that are invoked when 'others' are perceived as going against the nation, and therefore disrupting this investment. For example, Ahmed (2012) states that "to feel love for the nation, whereby love is an investment that should be returned (you are 'the taxpayer'), is also to feel injured by these others, who are 'taking' what is yours." (p.1). This form of market logic highlights how love, within a neoliberal context, is exploited by feelings of ownership and fear of limited quantities of love. For example, if love in this market-based understanding is expressed through material privileges, such as access to the best medicine, the best technology, the best military, and the best material indulgences, then there are conditions and limitations to who may be afforded these privileges. We can also find an implicit individualism at play, where one's investment in the nation is not necessarily an investment in the wellbeing

and livelihoods of all persons, but is rather an investment in a conditional love that is only expressed to “deserving” citizens.

Here, we can draw on the Lacanian notions of *drive* and *desire* in order to further understand how investments in the nation are internalized on an emotional and psychological level. The neoliberal impulse of *drive* reflects capitalist and neoliberal logics of domination, communicated through temporary pleasures and satisfactions at the expense of *desire* which reflects a larger, long-term revolutionary project that moves beyond the temporary compulsions of neoliberalism. Mirroring the impulse of *drive*, we can examine how these material privileges reflect temporary pleasures that simulate a sense of wholeness and security. Even though most citizens within a capitalist nation do not benefit from a majority of these privileges, the possibility to obtain a return on one’s investment is enough to keep many invested in the nation. Another dimension here that is important to recognize is the role of whiteness at the center of the national ideal. In the context of imperial nations, such as the U.S, one’s proximity to the national ideal is also a proximity to whiteness. On the other hand, those who are further away from the national ideal, such as those who disrupt the nation—whether through denouncing state-sanctioned violence, or a refusal to speak English, or engagement in public disturbances (unless those disturbances are seen as fighting *for* liberty or the nation of course)—are perceived to be further away from whiteness, and therefore less desirable, and less *loveable*.

Multicultural Love and the Centrality of Whiteness

Given the colonial history of the U.S, we cannot deny the centering of whiteness in defining the national ideal, and in deciding who is deserving of love. In our contemporary moment, we can observe Ahmed's understanding of how the national ideal creates conditions of love through variation in how protestors are depicted, depending on whether what they are protesting is 'for' or 'against' the nation. For example, we can question the differences in the ways that antiracist struggles are depicted, such as calls for the abolishment of the police state, from those perceived to be defending the national ideal, such as the refusal to wear a mask (in the context of the Covid-19 global pandemic) in the name of protecting one's civil and 'American' liberties.

This dynamic is further expressed with Ahmed's investigation of multicultural love, and the way that racial difference is valued in a "progressive" society. Ahmed (2012) argues that within a multicultural society, outsiders are allowed to be different from those seen as the standard citizen, as long as their differences are expressed in positive ways that support the nation. Since those in a multicultural society are not united by race or ethnicity, they are united by a shared nationhood. Love for the nation is what multiculturalism relies on, and it is the shared characteristic required to keep the nation together; "It is 'love' rather than history, culture or ethnicity that binds the multicultural nation together." (Ahmed, 2012, p.135). Ahmed seems to understand love as a central underlying force of multiculturalism rather than any other emotion or ideology because of its discursive power. Throughout this chapter, Ahmed specifically focuses on love as a guiding emotion in the othering process because of its discursive quality, where claims to love are weaponized to disguise ideologies of hate. In the case of multiculturalism, 'love'

is used discursively to distinguish itself from ‘old’ ideologies that are explicit in their forefronting of hate, such as overt racism. In other words, to mirror a progressive society where difference (from whiteness of course) is valued, love is invoked *discursively* to contrast itself from hate.

In an exploration of how whiteness is centered in diversity ideology, Mayorga-Gallo (2019) states that “Diversity ideology, much like color-blind racism helps individuals who live within an increasingly multicultural environment reconcile a national value of egalitarianism with pervasive racial inequity” (p.1792). When racial segregation and inequality are accepted as morally wrong, diversity ideology functions to compensate for the ongoing racial disparities that are systematically maintained by the nation. Ahmed (2012) views this form of ‘love’ as a humanist fantasy in that it ignores ongoing social conditions that perpetrate violence and disparate value for certain bodies, or as Marc Lamont Hill (2016) would suggest, ‘Nobodys.’ Ahmed (2012) insists that this multicultural fantasy “works as a form of conditional love, in which the conditions of love work to associate ‘others’ with the failure to return the national ideal” (p. 139). Being ‘othered’ in this way is not only a negation of being viewed as a deserving citizen, it also creates social conditions that pose different degrees of material and ontological violence for ‘others.’

This multicultural framework represents an ongoing colonality, where whiteness is at the center of this form of discursive love, and racial ‘others’ are again positioned in the periphery in the way that those who represent the nation—and in turn embody whiteness—create the conditions of love. Here, we also see the presence of *drive* where

visual representations of diversity, such as non-white leaders in positions of power, ‘inclusive’ curriculum, or cultural holidays, work to satisfy and compensate for the continual expressions of social inequality, violence, and calls for radical reparations, abolition, and sovereignty. These temporary compulsions not only work to create a facade of progress, they overtly ignore relations of racial, cultural, and psychological forms of domination that have been historically maintained. Additionally, we can see the presence of market-logic with the commodification of diversity, where the “valuing of the presence of people of color, their cultural productions, or predominantly non-white space becomes currency in a market where being “not a racist” is essential to a moral white identity” (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019 p.1799). The function of *drive* here is to increase the value of whiteness, through surface-level engagements with diversity, enough to perform the role of a ‘progressive,’ modern, liberal and tolerant citizen while continuing to uphold the matrix of power which whiteness is at the center of.

Considering the ways that multicultural love is an expression of a coloniality of power, through the centering of whiteness and commodification of diversity ideology and initiatives, we must continue to question what the conditions of radical love are, and if these conditions serve a different purpose than multicultural love.

Conditions of Radical Love

As Ahmed (2012) has outlined in her investigation of the politics of emotions, love (among other emotions) is influenced by certain social, political, and historical conditions that determine the degrees to which certain bodies are able to express or be subject to love. Ahmed’s understanding of the politics involved in the creation of

conditions of love highlight the need for us to distinguish between acting *in the name of* love from authentic and radical forms of loving. For example, Ahmed (2012) explores how acting in the name of love “can work to enforce a particular ideal onto others by requiring that they live up to an ideal to enter the community” (p.139). If acting in the name of love is connected to the creation of conditions and boundaries that determine who deserves love depending on their proximity to an ideal, then what does this mean for radical love? We can begin to answer this question by first considering the differences between multicultural love and radical love.

Adopting Ahmed’s understanding of love, we can view how radical love, like other forms of love, is influenced by different conditions that determine who is engaging in radical love, and who is not. For instance, while we make the intentional choice to engage in radical forms of love (Freire, 2005), how we make this choice is “influenced by our social and political surroundings, which may either respond to us in a loving way or not” (Lanas & Zembylas, 2014, p.38). Unlike multicultural love or a love for one’s nation, radical love has been theorized as a response to historical, social and political conditions that create material forms of violence and multidimensional forms of oppression. Claims to be loving or acting *in the name of love* are represented by empty words or apolitical action, such as multicultural love where love is expressed only through small affordances of diversity initiatives and ‘representation,’ whereas radical forms of love are expressed through actions that contribute to radical social changes that are informed by politics and history (Freire, 2005; hooks, 2000). While diversity initiatives and visual representations of marginalized identities are not without

importance or meaning, it is important to recognize the ways that these initiatives fall short when treated as the ultimate indicators of ‘progress,’ especially when considering the ways that progress narratives often work to legitimize whiteness by measuring progress through assimilation into white cultural norms and institutions (Ray et. al, 2017).

In order to distinguish itself from other forms of love that are apolitical and ahistorical, radical love also produces certain conditions. For example, Figueroa (2015) argues for a decolonial love that is central to motivating a project of decoloniality. This radical form of love is informed by history and committed to transforming both capitalist and colonial structures; “Decolonial love is a practice that bears witness to the past while looking towards a transformative and reparative future by unraveling coloniality, the matrix of power that is manifested in our contemporary conceptions of power, gender, and bodies” (Figueroa, 2015, p.44). A commitment to transforming coloniality through action (whether through small acts or larger, more bold action) can be considered a condition of radical love, where other claims to love are meaningless if they continue to ignore ongoing conditions of violence and relations of domination, *and* if they negate the voices of people and communities who are most intimately subject to these conditions.

While radical forms of love look different across various cultural, geographical, and historical contexts, we can examine the importance of identifying conditions of radical love with an example of decolonial love in practice. Education scholar Angela Valenzuela (2019) explores how a decolonial imaginary can be used as a liberating pedagogy within “third spaces,” where both real and imagined spaces intersect. Through

‘Academia Cuauhtli,’ a community based education project located at a community cultural arts center in Austin Texas, Valenzuela (2019) highlights the ways that this program enacted decolonial pedagogies by challenging colonial logics and traditions that are constructed as ‘normal’ through co-constructed and culturally relevant curriculum, and fostering community-based identities. She also highlights how this educational space, outside of a formal schooling institution, was able to create an environment where students, who were primarily Mexican, immigrant children were able to engage in a decolonial imaginary through the program’s intentional efforts to resist, rethink, and reimagine the alienating conditions of dominant schooling.

While this program still worked through various tensions and constraints within a settler colonial context, we can still see how a decolonial love may emerge from this space through the project’s intentional commitment to not only care for the children’s emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, but its willingness to participate in the reimagining of community spaces within a larger anti-immigration political context (Valenzuela, 2019). The ‘Academia Cuauhtli’ program demonstrates how conditions are important for understanding radical love because they can call for accountability. While the program is not without its own limitations and constraints, its commitment and *participation* in a larger project of decolonization is expressed through its curriculum, pedagogy, and acts of love in the form of supporting the wellbeing of the children in various senses of the word.

According to hooks (2000) unconditional or individual definitions of love are popular because they do not demand change in fixed and uncritical ways of thinking

about our society and the role of love. Defining the conditions of radical love further is important because we can not only discern actions that make claims to love, but we can also more closely identify when colonial and capitalist logics occur within this framework. However, given the complex ways that coloniality operates through upholding white supremacy and capitalism, it warrants us to be careful in defining what these conditions may be, so that we are not participating in the reinscribing of whiteness, and stunting the growth of radical love as a force that drives collective commitments to transforming relations of domination.

Conclusion

Ahmed argues that multicultural love, and the ‘humanist fantasy’ that it is paired with, ultimately function to create conditions of love that associate ‘others’ against the national ideal. As a differently packaged, but otherwise identical form of ‘national love,’ Ahmed’s understanding of multicultural love demonstrates how whiteness is centered in this application of love through its severance from broader understandings of power relations and history, and its positioning of ‘natural’ citizens who embody the national ideal which in turn reinscribes whiteness (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019).

When used only *discursively*, love is subject to being weaponized to disguise colonial and capitalist projects. Conditions of radical love in this sense are important in distinguishing claims to acting *in the name of love*. For instance, if we are claiming to love all of our students, but are not working to uncover the ways that we are participating in anti-Blackness, then are we actually loving? Likewise, if we support culturally relevant pedagogy in our classrooms, but are unwilling to commit to a larger, ongoing and

perpetually changing project of decolonization, then are we loving? These questions are not to suggest that perfection is a condition of radical love, but rather I am suggesting that to engage with love in its most radical form, we must be willing to continually interrogate and challenge ourselves, and to learn how to identify when we may be enacting colonial and capitalist logics. To participate overt and covertly in projects that are bigger than our individual selves, is a fundamental part of choosing to engage with radical forms of love.

**Part III. Anti-Blackness & Abolitionist Teaching: Exploring “Loving Darkness” In
Bettina Love’s *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the
Pursuit of Educational Freedom* (2019)**

With our present understanding of radical love as a conditional (Ahmed, 2012) and intentional force that is communicated through one’s participation in transforming conditions of violence and relations of domination, both overt and covertly (Freire, 2005), we can explore how these components of radical love emerge within our contemporary moment of social and political unrest within the U.S. With a more cohesive understanding of what radical love is, as well as an awareness of how colonial and capitalist logics may help inform and complicate conditions of radical love, this section will explore what radical love may look like within the U.S schooling context, and how it is connected to broader social and political issues within this context.

In *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* (2019), educational researcher Bettina Love investigates the intersections of race, colorism, anti-Blackness, education, and abolition. Through an integration of education research and theory, personal anecdotes, and a critical analysis of contemporary events, Love outlines a detailed argument for understanding contemporary issues in U.S education as historically grounded and connected to legacies of racism and anti-Blackness, and interconnected with other social issues throughout various avenues of U.S society.

Throughout this book, Love develops an argument for abolitionist teaching—a critical and fierce approach to teaching that I believe to be an expression of radical love

through its grounding in a historical awareness of contemporary conditions of violence, and its commitment to both struggle for the eradication of these conditions, and to foster the wellbeing of marginalized students. Love's analysis of the different components of abolitionist teaching helps us consider what radical love looks like within our contemporary moment in the U.S both within and beyond classrooms. Love first grounds the undeniable need for an abolitionist approach to liberation—defined by the eradication and freedom from all relations of domination, conditions of violence, forms of dispossession and displacement and anti-Blackness—with an understanding of the centrality of anti-Blackness in sustaining what Love describes as the *educational-survival-complex*. Beginning with the role of anti-Blackness in producing conditions of survival for students of color, and more specifically, what Love terms 'dark' students, we will first explore how these conditions of lovelessness are historically informed, and how they directly implicate the need for an abolitionist approach to liberatory struggles.

Centrality of Anti-Blackness and the Educational-Survival-Complex

Love (2019) grounds her argument for abolitionist teaching with a critical understanding of both historical and contemporary contexts of lovelessness within U.S schools. Drawing from theories of anti-Blackness, Love unpacks different forms of emotionally and physically violent school conditions through a serious consideration of the centrality of anti-Blackness (and what Love terms 'anti-darkness') in forefronting these conditions of lovelessness and violence. Love (2019) introduces a central focus in her argument for abolitionist teaching in what she calls the *educational-survival-complex*

where students of color, and particularly dark students within the U.S are situated within an education system that only offers students skills for survival, and has been historically built on the suffering of dark students. One mode of the *educational-survival-complex* is what Love describes as “spirit murdering” where racism “murders the spirit” of dark students through various levels of personal, psychological and spiritual injuries.

As Black intellectuals and scholars on Black education have theorized robustly, the permanence of structural racism is deeply ingrained in all U.S institutions, especially within its educational system (Bell, 2004; Brown, 2018; Dumas, 2014; Henry, & Dixon, 2016). The settler colonial legacy that produced and sustained chattel slavery, and the murder and displacement of Indigenous peoples throughout North and South America, are both foundational to the U.S economic and territorial expansion, and the colonial and capitalist logics that pushed this expansion continues to reproduce itself today (Gilmore, 2002). This racial permanence and *durability* has been fueled extensively by historically racialized discourses that directly influence the subjectivities of Black students (Brown, 2018). For example, Brown (2018) argues that the subjectivities of Black boys within schools “are not just informed by teachers’ explicit and implicit racial bias, but are held in place by a durable historical discourse on black male deviance that can be traced to the beginnings of Western modernity” (p. 53). It is from the early beginnings of Western modernity where we can trace the emergence of racial capitalism, which is to say all forms of capitalism (Card, 2020) in which Black bodies were specifically positioned within a colonial racial discourse that continues to pose ontological implications today (Brown, 2018; Fanon, 1967).

This deeply saturated colonial legacy, and the dominant and naturalized economic and social order that it produced, highlights the importance of critically examining the politics and ideologies embedded within schooling, and school curriculum (Watkins, 2001) as well as how these ideologies shape the well-being of Black students in particular. With a historical understanding for how these dominant ideologies have continued to shape curriculum, Black education scholars have further considered the specific ways that anti-Blackness emerges both overt and covertly within schooling spaces across different localities (Brown, 2018; Dumas, 2014; Shange, 2019). For Love, the *educational-survival-complex* emerges from this complex, contextual and historical convergence of anti-Blackness within various material, discursive and ideological spaces.

Limitations of Reformist Approaches to Liberatory Struggles

Love's understanding of "spirit murdering" is not only informed by this pervasive history of anti-Blackness, but is central in her call for a firm abolitionist approach to teaching (and overall citizenship as well). The deeply ontological and ideological implications of anti-Blackness within schooling—whether communicated by disproportionate and excessive disciplining of Black students, or embedded within curriculum—poses serious holes in reformist approaches to addressing not only racism within schools, but anti-Blackness more specifically. Given this historical understanding of the fundamental role of anti-Blackness in creating conditions of violence within schooling contexts, particularly for dark students, Love challenges the limitations of reformist approaches to 'social justice' which always fall short of working to eradicate anti-darkness. Love exemplifies this with liberal notions of 'love' where some teachers

claim to love all their students. Love mirrors Ahmed's (2012) critique of acting *in the name of* love as she asserts that empty claims to love all students, as well as claims to believe in "freedom" and "equality" for all, are meaningless when not paired with meaningful action. Love (2019) affirms that "We who are dark want to do more than survive: we want to thrive. A life of survival is not really living" (p. 10). This differentiation of thriving from surviving points to not only a *desire* to live a fulfilling life beyond the limitations of violence, but also a *right* to be well, and to matter through the affirmation of one's own history, cultural knowledges, and sense of community.

For Love, the differences between surviving and thriving can be seen within education, where she argues that education reformers only offer survival tactics to dark students in the forms of test-taking skills, professional development, and the teaching of 'proper' behavior. Here, we can see parallels to the Lacanian notions of *drive* and *desire*, where survival tactics represent the compulsions of *drive* in the form of temporary solutions and what Love calls "quick fixes" that make teachers, school administrators, and educational policy makers feel as though they are 'doing enough' to address social inequalities within schools. However, as we have seen from the legacy of Black education theory, the racial permanence in the U.S calls for more than quick fixes. Not only may the compulsions of *drive* reflect the naivety of some educational reformist approaches that attempt to address the graveness of colonial, capitalist and race relations in the U.S through a policy, or a best practice, but these compulsions also mirror the ways that whiteness is intentionally recentered:

These educational parasites need dark children to be underserved and failing, which supports their feel-good, quick-fix gimmicky narrative and the financial reason for their existence. Education reform is big business just like prisons...Both prisons and schools create a narrative of public outrage and fear that dark bodies need saving from themselves (Love, 2019 p.10)

Love uncovers a less innocent dimension of some reformist approaches, where the continual suffering of dark students is directly profited on by educational reformers as the seekers of justice. Similar to a multicultural love (Ahmed, 2012), we can see the way that whiteness is recentered when social justice work is a desirable topic in more dominant discourses. While a greater public awareness of educational inequalities and social injustice is by no means without importance, we must still be critical when examining the ways that ‘solutions’ for addressing these injustices and inequalities work to maintain the status quo, and limit students in developing skills to critically interpret intersectional forms of oppression. Reform in this way, communicated through quick and temporary fixes, does not address the fundamental commitments that radical love calls for which is a commitment to struggle for the dismantling of multidimensional forms of violence, relations of domination, and conditions of oppression. More specifically, reformist or liberal approaches to teaching are limited in their focus on working within the existing system. However, if the central role of anti-Blackness within schooling *and* society continues to be neglected, then relations of violence within schools and beyond are maintained, which subsequently has pressing consequences for dark children who are subject to both ideological and physical violences within and outside of the classroom.

Loving Darkness as Radical Love

It is because of these conditions of lovelessness, and the “spirit murdering” that occurs within classrooms for dark students in particular, that Love insists on moving beyond the confines of liberalism, to actually struggle against these conditions within schools and beyond, through more radical and *loving* approaches. Drawing from her own experiences, Love exemplifies the limitations of empty claims to love, as well as the consequences that arise when educators are disconnected from critical theories that provide space to interrogate the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness inside and outside of classrooms. For example, Love (2019) states that her teachers:

either did not know the conditions of “human hierarchy” or saw themselves as liberators with their anti-Black, color-blind rhetoric. As a result, I was a lost kid. I needed more than love and compassion; I needed to know what folx who looked like me meant to the world (p. 47)

Instead, Love proposes a more radical form of love that is expressed through “loving darkness” which moves beyond empty claims to love. Drawing from hooks (1994), Love asserts that loving darkness is an act of political resistance that counters romanticized and meaningless claims to loving all students, and is rather expressed through a historically informed understanding of ontological and epistemological conditions of anti-Blackness, and a firm centering of Black resilience and joy. Love (2019) showcases an example of “loving darkness” through her own experience as a youth with a radical civics education program called FIST, where she learned how to love darkness;

In FIST we learned that being Black was beautiful, to love our skin, that our darkness had a history of resistance, pride, community, joy, love, and understanding, and that we mattered to our community, to the world, and to ourselves. We also learned that Black power meant grassroots organizing...We saw ourselves taking up physical, intellectual, political, and creative space in places we had thought were unimaginable (p.49)

For Love, loving darkness is directly linked to *matter*ing, especially within the context of the U.S where racism and anti-Blackness are ingrained into its structural and social fabric both historically and presently. To matter is to not only feel loved, but to be supported within a community that affirms one's whole self. Love's understanding of "loving darkness" can be considered another dimension of radical love, where spaces that foster mattering, such as the FIST civics education program, hold specific implications for Black students and youth given the historic legacy of Black education within the U.S.

For Love, we can see loving darkness in action within spaces that openly center Black history, power, and resilience, which is directly linked to mattering, which fosters a love of oneself as well as a love of others. Love demonstrates this when she states, "I learned to truly love myself as a member of FIST. Loving my Blackness was the first step in my politicization, mattering, and wanting to thrive" (p.50). As a radical form of love, 'loving darkness' indicates an emotion that cannot be commodified; it is an embodied force that fuels one's commitment to others. For if we merely engaged in a 'liking' of darkness, then surely our commitments would fall short in the face of confrontation, discomfort and violence. To love darkness, like other radical forms of love, is

communicated through action and implicates a powerful commitment that poses a serious opposition to the predatory impulses of capitalism and colonialism.

Conclusion: How Radical Love Emerges from the Abolitionist Struggle

Love argues that we need to struggle and commit to an abolitionist pursuit to educational freedom—not reform. Love’s call for abolition is grounded in an understanding of the limitations of reformist approaches to social justice that strive to work within the existing system. While working to make improvements within existing structures and conditions of lovelessness may be an immediate first step towards larger projects of liberation, implicit within this approach is a belief that this system, despite its egregious history, can be salvaged (Shange, 2019). While there are many ongoing debates on whether reform or abolition (or a combination of both) are needed to eradicate relations of domination, it is important to note the complexity of these discourses. Love (2019) highlights this complexity when she states that history tells us “that if we just change, adjust, or even eradicate one piece of the oppressive hydra, such as the prison-industrial complex, another piece will grow in its place” (p.91). It is because of this seemingly immortal hydra, which can serve as a metaphor for the various ways that the matrix of power that is *coloniality* works to rebirth itself, that an abolitionist approach is necessary. Not separate from this matrix of power, is a pervasive anti-Blackness that reflects the permanence of structural racism within all U.S institutions. Both this legacy of coloniality and anti-Blackness suggest the need to understand how struggles against colonial and anti-Black conditions require commitments that move beyond the

restrictions of reformist approaches, which ask us to engage in palpable, and tangible approaches to social change.

Freire's (2005) notion of 'armed love' highlights how abolitionist commitments require a protective armor fueled by a radical love in the face of violent conditions. This armed love comes with an understanding that to go against the matrix of power that is coloniality, and to counter the governmentality of the state and its militarism, is a long-term and often violent process. Fanon (1963) insists that because the historical relationship between the colonized and colonizer was born from violence, this relationship can only be undone by violence. It is because of this reality that an armed love is necessary to sustain engagement in struggle. However, this is not to say that happiness, joy, and love are not present when struggling in the face of violence. Love insists that wellness is also a crucial part of abolitionist struggle, where allowing space to support one's own physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing is imperative to not only participating in long-term liberatory struggles, but to also enjoy one's life.

Given our context within the U.S as a settler-colonial and capitalist nation-state, it is important to consider the ways that colonial and capitalist logics implicate themselves within constructions of love, such as 'national love' and 'multicultural love' (Ahmed, 2012). Ahmed's (2012) understanding of 'national' and 'multicultural love' asks us to consider what the conditions of radical love may be, and how these conditions may work to resist the over-saturation of colonial and capitalist logics that undermine decolonial, antiracist, and liberatory struggles. We should also consider what the specific conditions of 'loving darkness' and abolitionist teaching might be.

Love's theorization of 'loving darkness' and abolitionist teaching both represent radical forms of love through their historical awareness of contemporary conditions of violence, and their focus on mattering which has radical implications for dark students in particular. While abolitionist teaching has strong implications for educational contexts, we can translate loving darkness and abolitionist approaches to ongoing social and political issues beyond the U.S schooling context. In my next section, I will consider the ways that Freire's (2005) notion of 'armed love,' Ahmed's (2012) 'multicultural' and 'national' love, and Love's (2019) understanding of abolitionist teaching and loving darkness can be brought together toward a contemporary understanding of radical love in politics and education. In addition, these arguments can deepen our understanding of the contemporary historical moment in the U.S. Specifically, I will consider what the implications are of these radical understandings of love when considering the contemporary Black Lives Matter Movement.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Freire, Ahmed and Love in Dialogue

Love is an emotion and force that is undertheorized explicitly within educational research. While aspects of love have been weaved throughout some critical education theory (Darder, 2000; Freire, 2005) there is still much to learn from an explicit investigation into the theoretical and tangible components of radical forms of love. For this particular project, I have examined Ahmed's (2012) analysis of 'national' and 'multicultural' love, as well as radical forms of love such as Freire's (1997, 2005) notion of 'armed' love and Love's (2019) understanding of abolitionist teaching and 'loving darkness' as radical forms of love. These forms of radical love move beyond romanticized, individualistic, universal and unconditional forms of love. Rather, they are rooted in an awareness of, and commitment to struggling against conditions and relations of violence. While not the only emotion that motivates and fuels struggles for liberation, love (in partnership with other emotions) works as a central force in motivating the often exhaustive, and long-term project that comes with committing to participate in struggles against conditions of violence and lovelessness.

Freire (2005) set the groundwork for how we can see radical love emerge within critical pedagogical practices. A key premise of critical pedagogy is its underscoring of the undeniable relationship between education, and the broader social, historical and political conditions that inform educational spaces. While his *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* was originally written a little over 20 years ago, Freire's philosophy of the emotional dimensions of teaching creates a theoretical

space for us to examine not only where radical forms of love may be implicated within critical pedagogical spaces, but how they motivate commitments to participating in liberatory struggles. With our exploration with Freire's text *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (2005), I found that Freire asks us to recognize the broader historical, cultural, and political contexts that directly inform teaching. He argues that teachers and the contexts that they teach within are all connected to larger social, political and historical contexts that directly inform their craft. It is because of this connection between the practice of teaching and larger social contexts, that teachers have a responsibility to respond and participate in transforming conditions of violence. While exploring this text, I was able to uncover a firm love ethic that is embedded in this critical pedagogical approach, where recognizing and developing a critical awareness of these historical, cultural, and political contexts as well as a commitment to participating in collective efforts to transform multidimensional conditions of violence are expressions of radical love.

Love's (2019) *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* contextualizes what critical pedagogical practices look like, and how their importance is implicated within the history of schooling in the U.S, particularly for 'dark' students. Love deepens Freire's theorizing of the responsibility of teachers through her explicit consideration of 'anti-darkness' in forefronting conditions of violence both within and beyond U.S schooling contexts. While Freire understands the implications of teachers and teaching within a broad theoretical context, he does not specifically address the ways that anti-Blackness or settler colonialism inform radical forms of loving. The theoretical foundations of Freire's understanding of love and

pedagogy are greatly strengthened when put into conversation with scholars who question how love informs the dismantling of not only systemic anti-Blackness and settler colonialism, but how intersections of homophobia, transphobia, sexism, classism and nationalism converge and create specific conditions of violence (Moore, 2018). Freire's notion of armed love addresses the importance of a love that is not only an affinity for the wellbeing and livelihoods of others, but is simultaneously committed to fighting to ensure the wellbeing and livelihoods of our communities and others. This is a great starting point for understanding radical notions of love, but is strengthened with more historicized understandings of radical love that speak to specific contexts and dimensions of violence. For example, Freire's 'armed love' as a radical form of love is reflected within Love's understanding of 'loving darkness.' For Freire, an armed love implicates a willingness to fight and struggle for the liberation of all oppressed peoples, where 'loving darkness' deepens this understanding through its explicit forefronting of anti-Blackness as a primary force in sustaining structural and ideological conditions of violence. Love (2019) understands 'loving darkness' as an act of political resistance, where the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of Black students matter.

This explicit consideration of a radical love for Black students is rooted in an armed love that is committed to struggling to ensure that social conditions reflect the mattering of Black students. In educational spaces, Love (2019) illustrates how 'loving darkness' is communicated through abolitionist teaching. As an expression of armed love, which invokes a firm commitment to action, and 'loving darkness' which forefronts the mattering of Black students, abolitionist teaching unites action with the refusal to

participate in ongoing relations of violence, especially conditions that directly impact the wellbeing of Black students:

Abolitionist teaching is refusing to take part in zero-tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline...Abolitionist teaching ensures that students feel safe in schools and that schools are not perpetrators of violence toward the very students they are supposed to protect..Abolitionist teaching supports and teaches from the space that Black Lives Matter, all Black Lives Matter, and affirms Black folx' humanity (Love, 2019 p.12)

As a critical pedagogical practice, abolitionist teaching embraces a love ethic through its critical awareness of historically informed conditions of violence, such as the centrality of racism within U.S institutions, *and* its engagement in refusing these conditions. Love within abolitionist teaching is also expressed through prioritizing the physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of students, paired with a central understanding of the implications that a pervasive and institutionalized racism carries for Black students in particular, as well as other non-white students.

With this outline of abolitionist teaching, we can see the ways that Freire (2005) provides a theoretical grounding for understanding the critical, political and emotional responsibility that is implicated within the profession of teaching. While Freire's theorizing of radical love in the classroom does not provide us with explicit consideration of the relationship between radical love and other social discourses like anti-Blackness or decoloniality, his theory is deepened when put into conversation with more contextualized notions of love like 'loving darkness' (Love, 2019). As a result, we can

identify how love emerges from practices that are not explicitly associated or described as loving, such as abolitionist teaching. Being able to both identify and distinguish projects and practices that are engaging radical forms of love is necessary in our disengagement with projects and practices that promote complicity and sustain conditions of lovelessness.

Through identifying Love's (2019) understanding of abolitionist teaching as a form of radical loving, we can more easily identify how reformist or liberal approaches to addressing social issues might employ discourses of love (ex. teachers that claim they love all their students and do not see their skin color) but do not reflect love in their actions. Rather, these reformist and liberal approaches often adopt quick fixes in lieu of engaging radical politics of transformation, eradication, and reimagining (Love, 2019). These approaches are also reflected in Ahmed's (2012) notion of 'multicultural love' where love is used discursively to invoke an image of 'progressivism'; however, within this framework, whiteness is positioned as embodying a 'natural' citizen of the nation, which within the U.S, reflects a logic of settler colonialism where the authority to accept 'others' (who are not natural to the nation) is reserved for those who embody whiteness. It is against this setting of reformist approaches and multicultural love, that radical change is exchanged for temporary satisfactions and distractions.

The Importance of Uncovering Colonial, Capitalist and Neoliberal Logics

In this study, the Lacanian notions of *drive* and *desire* helped us locate the psychological and emotional dimensions of the predatory neoliberal compulsions that are communicated in the form of temporary fixes and deflections from addressing the

ongoing legacy of coloniality. Farther than just a political and economic rationality, neoliberal logics are invasive in their persistent insertion into various dimensions of society (De Lissovoy, 2018; 2015). When considering neoliberal logics within the realm of emotions, I found how these logics entangle themselves with emotions. For instance, we saw how love within Ahmed's (2012) analysis reflected market logic in the way that those who 'love the nation' invest in the nation with the expectation that the nation will return their investment through material and social privileges. However, this relationship is contingent on the existence of outsiders since these material and social privileges are limited within a capitalist society. Only those who work hard, play by the rules of the nation, and devote themselves to progressing the project of the nation (through military, economic, and territorial initiatives) are able to receive the nation's love.

Ahmed's (2012) analysis of the conditions of 'national love' shows the way that emotions merge with capitalist and neoliberal logics, where the presence of 'outsiders' in the nation invokes visceral feelings of disgust, hatred or betrayal. Market logic, and its emphasis on individualism and competition, is entangled with notions of love, where investments in the nation (whether monetary or through devotional practices, such as storming the U.S capital in the name of love for the nation) becomes a distorted way of understanding love. The logic(s) reflected in the notion of *drive* have important implications for love. One of these implications is that we should further consider the ways that colonial and capitalist logics influence how we perceive love, and how we define and determine what engaging in love looks like.

For example, we can see the influence of colonial and capitalist logics in distorting perceptions of love in our present moment with the nation-wide public Black Lives Matter demonstrations that began in Saint Paul, Minneapolis after the murder of George Floyd. From mass marches, to taking over police precincts, to the burning of various buildings, the nation saw collective expressions of anger, disgust, and sorrow—which are all emotions that surround radical love as they are visceral responses to profoundly insidious state-sanctioned violence against loved ones. However, the actions of protestors were not generally perceived as acts of love, and prompted national controversy on the respectability and appropriateness of protesting as well as showcasing public displays of emotions like anger, disgust, and sadness. Rather than focusing on the root cause of these overt, collective and public forms of civil disobedience, there was a hyperfocus on the destruction of property. We can consider this fixation on property as a demonstration of how capitalist logics become entangled with perceptions of love. I am reminded of an image that was circulating amid these national debates in Kenosha, Wisconsin where the words “You have stolen more than we could ever loot” were spray painted on the side of a Manufacturing and Commerce building. This particular social commentary attempted to recenter the reason for the presence of public outrage through the notion of stolen; stolen dreams, stolen future, stolen *life*. Contrasted against a vandalized building, these particular words reflect a resistance to the nation’s hyper-focus on the destruction of property rather than stolen life.

The Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) is a movement of love, and is distinct from right-wing movements and identitarian love, such as a love of one’s own nation or

race (Gilman-Opalsky, 2020). In order to differentiate identitarian love, in which notions of property and ownership lurk beneath, Gilman-Opalsky (2020) argues that we need to carefully consider what the movements are responding to. He asks the question: “Are the movements about defending race and nation and deepening the exclusionary power of existing power holders over others? If yes, then these movements are not movements of love” (p. 283). A clear example of this can be seen with the protesters who stormed the U.S capital in order to defend the “integrity” of the nation in the face of what was believed to be election fraud and sabotage from the political left. When applying Gilman-Opalsky’s question to this particular situation, we can consider how storming the U.S capital *in the name of love* for the nation is starkly different than the BLM demonstrations from May, 2020. The centering of Black life in the “Black Lives Matter” movement encapsulates a movement of love through its response to stolen life. This is contrasted with movements that are reflective of an identitarian love through their response to perceived injuries to a single race or nation.

When we can identify emerging colonial, capitalist and neoliberal logics, we can also interrogate how these logics are implicated in how we understand love, and how this understanding informs how we engage in love. Radical forms of love ask us to interrogate our own ways of loving. Do we love the nation? Or perhaps we love the *people* that make up the nation. But do we love all people within the nation? For instance, are those who continue to willingly perpetrate violence to vulnerable communities deserving of our love? Radical forms of love do not necessarily assume that love must be given unconditionally. In this sense, how do we understand the conditions of radical

forms of love, and further, how have communities historically created conditions, boundaries, and expectations for love?

These are complex questions, and cannot be answered universally, however, they are necessary to consider because they inform how we understand ongoing struggles for liberation. For example, in what ways might we be undermining the legitimacy of radical love when we question the respectability or appropriateness of how communities decide to express their anger and outrage at pervasive state-sanctioned violence? While Ahmed (2012) questions the conditions that regulate who is deserving (and who isn't) of the nation's love, her analysis of conditional love also asks us to consider what the conditions of radical love are, and how these conditions are historically informed, such as the specific role of anti-Blackness within U.S schooling (Love, 2019).

hooks (2000) asserts that definitions of love are vital starting points to understanding what love actually is, and can help us visualize how definitions, as forms of conditions, are crucial in distinguishing love from actions that are not coming from spaces of love, but rather seek to uphold current relations of domination. If we accept the notion that love is universal, and unconditional, then we open the space for anything to count to as love. This includes the idea that love and abuse can occur simultaneously, where an abuser may still love the person they are abusing. hooks (2000) argues that we must be able to engage in setting collective definitions of love so that these conditions can help guide us in our journey to engaging with authentic forms of loving.

Through my analysis of where love emerges from Freire's (2005) understanding of critical pedagogy, Ahmed's (2012) exploration of conditional love within a nation, and

Love's (2019) outlining of abolitionist approaches within education, I have found that radical love is primarily communicated through action. This is a fundamental part of radical love, which distinguishes it from empty claims to love. hooks (2000) contends that if we begin to consider love as an action more than a feeling, then we can create a relationship with love that assumes accountability. Throughout this project, I have identified the ways that action is contingent to radical forms of love whether through 'loving darkness' covertly through one's pedagogical practices, or overt participation in public displays of civil disobedience. Radical forms of love move beyond solely discursive spaces and are engaged through participation in collective struggles.

Radical love, which is first and foremost sourced from a deep love and care for the collective wellbeing of living things (not excluding land or the environment), comprises a type of love that fuels unwavering commitments to participate in long-term, global, and collective struggles for Black liberation, Indigenous sovereignty, and emancipation from all relations of violence. Radical love motivates our willingness to welcome struggle and setbacks with an understanding of the complexity of obstacles that will surely arise when attempting to dismantle this hydra of coloniality and its many heads (Quijano, 2000). Overall, what gives detailed explorations into critical understandings of love meaning and a sense of urgency are existing conditions of violence.

Final Remarks: Radical Love and Conditions of Lovelessness

Initially, I formed this project within the context of a global pandemic amid heightened nation and global-wide feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and fear. This

historically unique moment made existing fallacies within U.S public and private institutions more visible than before. From unemployment systems, government, prison, and schooling institutions, we were able to actively see, at an amplified rate, the undeniably damaging conditions that have continued to grow and evolve within this settler-colonial and neoliberal nation-state. My specific focus on the role of love had initially been fostered through explicit and implicit theories of love embedded within feminist, decolonial and critical pedagogy discourses. However, radical notions of love provided profound insight not only into educational discourses surrounding the importance of critical pedagogy, but also into our present social and political moment.

My specific interest in radical love was primarily motivated by ongoing antiracist struggles for both the surviving and thriving of Black lives, which has been communicated in the present on a national (and global) platform with the Black Lives Matter movement. While antiracist struggles in the forms of civil disobedience, protests, and riots are not remotely new events, this particular moment, amid a global pandemic and ongoing spikes in national conversations about the intersection of racism, antiblackness and militancy of this nation's police state, presented myriad demonstrations of collective resistance and revolts.

It is from this context that this project was developed within, and had greatly illustrated how radical forms of love were being expressed throughout the nation, specifically with the persistent expressions of civil disobedience after George Floyd's murder. While protesters were labeled many things, such as 'domestic terrorists,' a crucial element was missing from mainstream discourses about these overt acts of resistance;

that of the role of love as a fundamental force that informs expressions of anger, rage, loss.

For the year that I have been developing this project, many more events have occurred that continue to demonstrate the importance of further developing and taking seriously critical theories of love that are directly related to the material realities of marginalized peoples. As I am writing this, from the month of April, 2021 alone, we have lost 13 year old Adam Toledo, 16 year old Ma'Khia Bryant, 17 year old Anthony Thompson Jr, and 19 year old Daunte Wright; all youth killed by police whose murders have been given a national platform. When we stop and really let this sink in, it is incredibly overwhelming, but these perpetual conditions of lovelessness cannot be ignored. While love alone cannot transform conditions and relations of violence, we must be willing to center critical inquiries into love where we can begin to uncover how love informs, drives and establishes our collective commitments to others. To recognize ongoing conditions of lovelessness, and uncovering their historical relationship to ongoing legacies of coloniality is only a start to eradicating their presence. Radical forms of love not only ask us to recognize these realities, but to commit to participating in collective struggles of liberation, emancipation, and sovereignty.

From our investigation, we have found that radical love is not an individualist project that can be easily commodified. In fact, it is radical love's resistance being commodified that makes it a powerful notion to study. Radical love is not an ahistorical, decontextualized, or unconditional force. Nor is it the singular solution or end-all be-all for the deeply complex matrix of power that is coloniality, and it is not a universal force

that holds the same meaning for complex and intersectionally marginalized peoples. Rather, this project asks us to take the time to understand where we may locate radical forms of loving in our daily lives, to ask ourselves who we love, what we love, and how this love informs our own commitments to ensuring the wellbeing of individuals and communities. While there is no singular or universal meaning for radical love, further research should continue to consider how we can support and encourage radical loving in ways that resist and reject colonial, capitalist, and neoliberal logics.

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