WHAT'S RADICAL LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT: Navigating Identity, Pedagogy, and Positionality in Pre-Service Education

TY-RON DOUGLAS
CHRISTINE NGANGA

Abstract

An important aspect of preparing teachers who are critically conscious is integrating and interrogating the positionalities of those who work with pre-service teachers. In turn, the process of interrogating positionalities as teacher educators also allows us to incorporate pedagogies that offer pre-service teachers an opportunity to interrogate who they are as future teachers of diverse student populations. In this paper, we therefore use Paulo Freire's concept of *radical love* to explore the similarities and disjunctures in our pedagogy and positionalities as international scholars of color. Specifically, we draw from our experiences as doctoral students teaching undergraduate and graduate pre-service teachers. The purpose of this paper is twofold—to discuss how our positionalities impact the practice of our teaching and to explore ways in which we enact radical love in our classrooms.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher identity, critical pedagogy, radical love

Critiques of teacher preparation and leadership programs have suggested that it is not enough to expose prospective teachers and school leaders to "best" practices of teaching linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse students. The need to develop the attitudes, knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary among pre-service educators for them to be competent to teach and lead a diverse student population has remained a major policy issue in U.S. teacher education (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn; Milner, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1990). In a quest to continue the commitment to social justice and equity in public schools, there is still a lot that remains to be done pertaining to developing effective teachers who are culturally competent and critically conscious. The student population in U.S. schools continues to become increasingly different in background from the background of their teachers. Key researchers have broken ground in this area through their various perspectives on the issue of educating pre-service teachers and leaders—Gloria Ladson Billings (1995) on culturally relevant pedagogy, Geneva Gay (2000) on culturally responsive teaching, Brooks and Miles (2010) and Horsford, Grosland, and Gunn (2011) on culturally relevant leadership, Kenneth Zeichner (1983) on traditions of reform in teacher education and Christine Sleeter (2001) on preparing mainly white preservice teachers to teach diverse students. Their work has been influential in enhancing the knowledge of policy, theory, and practice in educating students effectively and highlighting what still needs to be done.

However Bartolomé (1994), Giroux (2005), and Wilson, Douglas, and Nganga (2013), among others, point out that the debate about improving minority academic achievement has often been reduced to a technical issue in policy texts and in preparation programs. Bartolomé (1994) further explains that the academic underachievement of minority students is often explained as a result of a lack of "cognitively, culturally, and/or linguistically appropriate teaching methods and educational programs" while "the solution to the problem of academic underachievement tends to be constructed in primarily methodological and mechanistic terms dislodged from the sociocultural reality that shapes it" (pp. 173-174). Further, the question of how teachers and leaders should be educated cannot be explored without taking into consideration the role of teacher education and leadership preparation programs in maintaining or transforming the institutional arrangements of schools and understanding the complex social, political, and economic patterns that are linked to schooling (Brunner, Hammel, & Miller, 2010; Sloan, 2009; Zeichner, 1983, 1993). In this regard, as scholars and educators of pre-service teachers and school leaders, we wish to extend this conversation using a critical pedagogical lens and specifically Paulo Freire's concept of *radical love* to interrogate our ways of teaching and opening up spaces for dialogue towards educating pre-service teachers and leaders who are critically conscious. Preparing to teach and lead a culturally and linguistically diverse student body warrants that educators examine their own values and assumptions about working with

students who are different from them. Indeed, teacher educators such as Sleeter (2001) acknowledge that the cultural gap between students in the schools and the educators who teach and lead them continues to grow. Statistics confirm this cultural gap with the teaching work force being over 80% white (NCES, 2009). One's ideological posture informs and often times unconsciously colors the perceptions of teachers who work with diverse students (Bartolomé, 2004). Hence, it is important for pre-service teachers and those in leadership preparation programs from dominant cultures to have avenues in university classrooms where they can process issues pertaining to cultural differences, their uncertainties, and assumptions that they may have about the students they will teach and lead.

An important aspect of preparing teachers and leaders who are critically conscious is integrating and interrogating the positionalities of those who work with pre-service teachers and school leaders. In turn, the process of interrogating our positionalities as educators also allows us to incorporate pedagogies that offer pre-service teachers and school leaders an opportunity to interrogate who they are as future teachers of diverse student populations. In this paper, we therefore use Paulo Freire's concept of radical love to explore the similarities and disjunctures in our pedagogy and positionalities as international scholars of color. Specifically, we draw from our experiences teaching undergraduate and graduate pre-service teachers, and school leaders. The purpose of this paper is twofold—to discuss how our positionalities impact the practice of our teaching and to explore ways in which we enact radical love in our classrooms.

Defining *epistemology* and *positionality* is a necessary endeavor in this essay, and so for the purposes of linguistic transparency and authorial catharsis, we acknowledge and accept that there are embedded complexities and challenges to amalgamating our voices, positionalities, and epistemologies into a coherent co-written manuscript. We persist with this highly nuanced project, rift with its own complexities, because of our commitments to social justice and anti-oppressive teaching. We embrace Dillard's (2003) admonition that "epistemology (how we know reality) is not a monolithic body, but is instead the ways in which reality is a deeply cultured knowing that arises from and embodies the habits, wisdom, and patterns of its contexts of origin" (p. 155). Said another way, one's epistemology is a highly nuanced filter that is constructed from an amalgamation of the social, political, and historical dynamics of lived experience. How we know reality is not a streamlined process that leads to a static end. Instead, much like one's positionality, the process of knowing shifts and morphs as variables and contexts change. In this light, we find Villaverde's (2008) definition of positionality to be powerful and apropos for this essay because it explicitly reveals the intersections between identities, epistemology, and positionality. Villaverde (2008) describes positionality as "how one is situated through the intersection of power and the politics of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, language, and other social factors"

(p. 10). Moreover, we seek to account for the complexity and diversity that inform our identities, our practices as educators in teacher-education classrooms, and our roles as researchers/scholar-practitioners who embrace elements of critical pedagogy and radical love in our praxis.

Pedagogy not oppression. There is a false assumption that pedagogy and teaching are necessarily synonymous. There are many teaching practices and ideologies that are not pedagogical in the Freirian sense, and these distinctions must be made explicit, through critical reflection, thoughtful interrogation, and conscientious inquiry if we are to honor the intent of Freire's (1970) manifesto, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and more importantly, become critical agents of anti-oppressive education as a political project. Sadly, pre-service teachers and school leaders are given far too few opportunities to reflect on, inquire about, and interrogate who they are as human beings, developing pedagogues, and critical agents/facilitators of anti-oppressive 21ˢᵗ century classrooms and schools. This is not to suggest that there is a neat and unified approach to critical or anti-oppressive pedagogy. Our position is quite the opposite, in fact. Teachers who honor and embrace the Freirian tradition of pedagogy do not simply acknowledge and adjust to the messiness concomitant with critical reflection, thoughtful interrogation, and conscientious inquiry. Instead, these pedagogues are intentional about elucidating (and even creating) the inherent tensions, while respecting the "liminal spaces" (Villaverde, 2008) that members of the learning community will need to see the intersections between power, oppression, and pedagogy, *identify* their complicity in the status quo, and *embrace* their responsibility to act. Villaverde (2008) reminds us that "[t]here is no set way or process for pedagogy; it is ever evolving, organic, and dynamic" (p. 135). What is clear is that one's pedagogy (and leadership, for that matter) cannot be disassociated from power differentials and oppression, for and across individuals and institutions. Still, defining or describing *pedagogy* as the positionality of the teacher or leader in relation to these dynamics alone falls short of Freire's philosophy of education. Aronowitz (1993) declares that, the term he (Freire) employs to summarize his approach to education, 'pedagogy' is often interpreted as a 'teaching' method rather than a philosophy or a social theory. Few who invoke his name make the distinction. To be sure, neither does *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (p. 8) Macedo (2000) makes this distinction clear in describing pedagogy in his introduction to *30ᵗʰ Anniversary Edition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where he points out that "education is inherently directive and must always be transformative" (p. 25). Macedo (2000) asserts that educators must understand that education is never neutral, even "as they engage in a social construction of not seeing" (pp. 24- 25). For Villaverde (2008), "pedagogy sits at the intersection of understanding the systems of oppression, one's location within these, and one's agency in negotiating such experiences" (pp. 128-129). This broader conceptualization of pedagogy is vital to this analysis, because it lays the

groundwork for understanding how revolutionary ideologies like critical pedagogy/ theory (of which Freire is often credited as the founder), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), and even post-structural pedagogy are embodied in and operationalized within the context of *radical love* (as a pedagogical strategy/ approach). In the following section, we further explore critical pedagogy, radical love, and teacher identity in order to situate our own positionalities and praxis as teacher-educators who are committed to anti-oppressive, transformative pedagogy.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is an approach to education that involves liberation. Freire's work has been pertinent in furthering a critical pedagogical approach to education (Freire 1970, 1992, 2005). Other 20th century thinkers that have furthered this approach include McLaren (1999) and Bartlett (2005). Darder (1991) describes *critical pedagogy* as an

> educational approach rooted in the tradition of critical theory. Critical educators perceive their primary function as emancipatory and their primary purpose as commitment to creating the conditions for students to learn skills, knowledge, and modes of inquiry that will allow them to examine critically the role that society has played in their self-formation. (p. xvii)

In this respect, critical pedagogy is highly contextual and is neither a "recipe" nor a "method" (Darder, 1991). Villaverde (2008) offers this poignant description:

> Critical pedagogy aims to develop and nurture critical consciousness to address larger political struggles and transformations in dealing with rampant oppressive social conditions. It works from Paulo Freire's critique on the banking concept of education to chart new pedagogical experiences, carefully mining popular culture for a wide range of learning possibilities. A transformative pedagogy is made possible by the close investigation of margins and center (that is, of power) and through the cultivation of critical consciousness, praxis, and engagement of the self as a public change agent (p. 129).

Further, Kincheloe (2008) asserts, "proponents of critical pedagogy understand that every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested spaces" (p. 2). The culture of schooling is not a neutral culture where every child naturally finds a sense of belonging. Teachers have to intentionally carry a disposition in their practice that enacts an inviting space for all students, including those who have been traditionally marginalized (Douglas & Peck, 2013).

Said differently, a critical pedagogical approach to education values learning experiences as an avenue for bringing forth social change by engaging in criticisms

of capitalism, inequity, injustice, and other social ills that plague institutions and the larger society. Critique is never disassociated from the learners' responsibility to reflect on how they may be complicit in and beneficiaries of inequitable systems and disproportionate power relations. Critique is not an end in and of itself. It is only as effective as the learners' capacity to both question and ground their ideologies and those of the wider community within larger geo-political, socio-historical, and cultural constructs. Therefore, teachers who engage in critical pedagogical approaches are always informed about current issues pertaining to injustices and intentional about contextualizing and connecting these issues to the past. Critical pedagogy is a larger filter that undergirds conceptualizations of *radical love* which we discuss below.

Radical Love

Trying to establish a unified and universally accepted definition of love is an exercise in futility. And we will make no such attempt, since we respect that there are many interpretations of what love is and isn't based on various social, cultural, and spiritual traditions. Instead, for the sake of grounding our discussion of Freire's notion of *radical love* and our descriptions of how we mobilize his conceptualization in our own praxis, we believe it is necessary to acknowledge various understandings of *love*. *The New American Webster Handy College Dictionary* defines love as "affection for another person; an object of affection, a sweetheart; any strong liking or affection; (in games) a score of zero." Cunningham (2004) delineates between what she sees as "false love" and "real love" to suggest that: *real* love involves radical action…. When we choose real love, we refuse to work within the system. We don't play by The Rules. In real love, we choose to speak not in the language of competition and violence, but in that of cooperation and compassion. The language of real love is simple and straightforward. It begins with self-acceptance. Once we begin to remove the superficial measures of beauty, success, and what's considered   'good and normal' from our lives, we start to move towards accepting people in all their flawed glory…Real love can be as simple as a glass of water. (p. 37) Darder (2002) embraces a similar philosophy by asserting that love can be an anti-oppressive force used to resist exploitation.

Not surprisingly, there is disagreement among scholars on the various *types* of love as historically framed by Greek philosophers. While Helm (2005) asserts that there are three brands of *love* that are traditionally attributed to the Greek philosophical tradition, Lewis (1960) asserts that there are actually four types of love: *eros* ("romance"); *philia* (friendship); *storge* ("affection"); and *agape* ("unconditional love"). While Helm (2005) and Lewis (1960) disagree on the validity of *storge*, and the distinctions between the various brands of love are not always clear, there appears to be more consensus on the connections between *agape love* and spiritual traditions. For example, Ryoo, Crawford, Moreno, and McLaren (2009)

"privilege" *agape love* as the most appropriate 'brand' for framing their concep-
tualization of *critical spiritual pedagogy*. Lewis (1960) contends that *agape love* is
the brand of love that is described in 1 Corinthians 13, which is also described
as the *love chapter*. Christian biblical tradition affirms that "love is patient, love is
kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not easily angered, it
keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails"
(1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8, NIV). 1 John 4: 18 suggests that "perfect love casteth
out all fear." In this biblical text, there's the suggestion that the opposite of love
is not hate but fear. While both hooks (2003) and Hanh (1993) suggest that fear
is an impediment of love, hooks is intentional about highlighting the intercon-
nectedness of spirituality, education, and love. Similarly, Hanh (1993) declares
that "[t]he usual way to generate force is to create anger, desire, and fear. But these
are dangerous sources of energy because they are blind, whereas the force of love
springs from awareness, and does not destroy its own aims" (p. 84). These theo-
retical conceptualizations have interesting connections to Freire's understanding
of *love*, and more specifically, *radical love*.

Freire's notion of love is not entirely dissimilar from the perspectives of many
popular traditions. In fact, he asserts that "love is an act of courage, *not fear*…. a
commitment to others…. [and] to the cause of liberation" (1970, p. 78). Equally
significant is the centrality of dialogue to Freire's conceptualization of love, and
by extension, the relevance of language and its inherent power. Freire (1993) de-
clares:

> Dialogue cannot exist…in the absence of a profound love for the world
> and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and
> re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the
> same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue   itself (p. 89).

It is on this foundation that Freire's conceptualization of *radical love* stands. For
Freire, radical love requires a commitment to dialogue and the capacity to take
risks for the benefit of those we teach and ourselves. One of the risks we must take
as pedagogues is to relinquish oppressive practices in the classroom, such as *the
banking system of education*, in which students are treated like empty receptacles.
In place of trying to *fill* students with knowledge, *radical love* demands that we
utilize dialogue as a means of subverting dominant positionalities, since [love]
"cannot exist in a relation of domination" (Freire, 1993, p. 89). In this respect,
Freire's conceptualization of dialogue is far more demanding than surface con-
versations: "Founding itself upon *love, humility,* and *faith*, dialogue becomes a
horizontal relationship of which *mutual trust* between the dialoguers is the logical
consequence" (Freire, 1993, p. 91, emphasis added). This is a high calling that
seems diametrically opposed to traditional conceptions of schooling and com-
mon conceptualizations that many new and experienced teachers hold in the

classroom. Freire's (1993) questioning in this regard is profound and worthy of extended consideration:

> How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? How can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart from others—mere 'its' in whom I cannot recognize other 'I's'? How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of 'pure' men, the owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all non-members are 'these people' or the 'the great unwashed'? How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that naming the world is the task of an elite…? How can I dialogue if I am close to—and offended by—the contribution of others? How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness? Self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue….At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know. (p. 90)

In many respects, Freire's questioning above is the antithesis of traditional conceptualizations of what it means to teach. For one thing, far too few pre-service educators were/are challenged to reflect on these questions prior to entering the sacred space of the classroom. Without doubt, Freire (1970) would assert that this reality exists for the same reason that problem-posing education is unpopular in many schools: "[it] does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor. No oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why?" (p. 86). Notably, undergirding dialogue is an active *hope* and a commitment to *critical thinking* that is never disassociated from fearless action—all of which are always more potent than "false love, false humility, and feeble faith" (pp. 91 - 92). For those who claim or seek to educate, Freire's emphasis on communication, critical thinking, and dialogue as hallmarks of true education demand that radical love is extricated from the realm of the ephemeral so that our daily, horizontal interactions with humanity—in our classrooms and beyond—become the barometer by which we judge our praxis.

A profound love for humanity, coupled with a love for our subject matter and the power of ideas, must be present in order to teach—since teaching requires a love for the people and a love for the world (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1993, 1998). In fact, Freire staunchly believed that "teaching is an act of love" (Darder, 2002). McLaren (2000) described this love as "the oxygen of revolution, nourishing the blood…[and] spirit of struggle" (as cited in Darder, 2002, p. 148). As teachers of future educators and proponents of *radical love*, we recognize that we must equip our students with tools that they can use to liberate themselves from forms of ignorance and oppressive practices in order to embrace and enact "a revolutionary pedagogy" (Darder, 2002, p. 148) in their own classrooms. Radical love, as a theorization that privileges the voices and perspectives of marginalized voices and

non-dominant positionalities/ perspectives, allows us to recast power differences in our classrooms, even as it provides tools for dialogue, action, and hope.

Teacher Identity

In exploring our teaching through the concept of *radical love* we offer a space where educators have a better understanding of the "self" they bring to the classroom in addition to the historic, social, cultural and political forces that have played a role in how they perceive themselves as future teachers and leaders. Scholars who explore *teacher identity* have mainly explored the concept within the framework of professional and personal aspects of teaching, such as effectiveness and commitment in teaching, subject matter expertise, student relationships and collegial relationships, dispositions, values and beliefs towards teaching (Day, 2002; Day & Kington, 2008; Walkington, 2005). Additionally, even for those who explore teacher identity among pre-service teachers, such as Danielewicz (2001) and Olsen (2009) who utilize a holistic view of how teacher education programs impact the teacher-self that is emerging, their work— though significant—does not focus on the social, historical and political factors that shape the ideological stances of teachers. Specifically, how those ideologies are linked to issues of power and privilege is not made explicit. We wish to incorporate the sociopolitical factors that impact teacher identity and thus the perspectives they bring to the classroom about teaching and leading diverse learners. We acknowledge that identity markers such as race, ethnicity, class or gender are not static but fluid. In this regard, Cochran-Smith (1995) contends that it is crucial for educators to understand their identity with this kind of examination, beginning with investigating our own histories as educators— "our own cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds and our own experiences as raced, classed, and gendered children, parents, and teachers in the world" (p. 500). For this reason, there is need for educators in teacher education and leadership programs to incorporate the socio-cultural and political dimensions of identity to the professional and personal aspects to helping pre-service teachers and leaders understand who they are and how the self impacts their practice.

The works of Florio-Ruane with de Tar (2001) and Cooper (2007) are particularly useful in linking the personal-professional dimensions of teacher identity with the socio-cultural and political dimensions in helping pre-service teachers understand how who they are impacts how they teach. Florio-Ruane focuses on the dialectical relationship between the teacher and the diverse student body that preservice teachers will teach by using autobiographies of authors of diverse backgrounds, with the aim that "in their conversational responses to those writers and texts, teachers can awaken to their own experiences of their culture, especially those that influence their work as educators" (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 2001, p. xxvi-xxvii). In his review of Florio-Ruane's text, Sloan (2004) adds that "while

reading such texts by teachers is a way for them to learn about lived experiences of persons whose backgrounds are different from their own, the real power of such texts lies in their potential to foster reflexivity about teachers' own cultural identities" (p. 119). Indeed, Florio-Ruane and de Tar point out that conversations of such texts need to go beyond comfortable narratives of self and society in order to unsettle conventional notions of culture. Embracing an identity that entails teaching for diversity then requires the act of interrogating other people's experiences against the backdrop of one's own.

While Florio-Ruane and de Tar (2001) privilege cultural texts as the avenue through which identity work happens among pre-service teachers, Cooper (2007) places significance on community-based learning as an avenue for pre-service teachers to locate their professional selves by correcting misconceptions about culturally and linguistically diverse students. Through incorporating a series of activities in her course such as writing one's own autobiography and "walking a mile in another's shoes," Cooper noticed a shift in pre-service teachers' views and beliefs about the students they teach, as well as their families and the communities in which they live begin. The "connected sequential activities" they embark on allows them to learn "(a) who they are, (b) who they want to appear to be, and (c) who they are but do not want others to see" (Cooper, 2007, p. 253). In so doing, pre-service teachers critically examine their ideologies about teaching diverse learners. Thus, developing a professional identity is not just a matter of examining "who am I as a teacher, but additionally "who am I as a teacher of diverse learners?" This is an important component of identity work among pre-service teachers that has heavily influenced how we think about our teaching and scholarship.

Interrogating our positionalities and epistemologies

In order to evaluate how we navigate our identities, pedagogies, and positionalities (as well as those of our students) in our work as educators, it is necessary to make the connections between these concepts explicit. We see our positionalities and pedagogy as two interrelated concepts that are grounded in and outgrowths of various elements of personal, cultural, and community identity. Despite the many scholars who have commented on the social constructedness of the concepts of race, class, and gender (Dillard, 2003; Douglas, 2012; Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000; Gresson, 2008; hooks, 2000; Johnson, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1986; Schwalbe, 2005), there appears to be a reluctance in scholarly discourse to consistently interrogate the impact of socially constructed knowledge and "patterns of epistemology" (Dillard, 2003). As a result of this reluctance, many people also fail to see the social constructedness and constructive (or destructive, depending on one's positionality) powers of research (Dillard, 2003) and pedagogy. In this respect, post-formal thinking is significant in expanding the narrow conceptualizations of intelligence in order to uncover how particular communities

(usually non-white, poor, and feminine) have been excluded and marginalized (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993). Much like critical pedagogy, "post-formal thinking works to get behind the curtain of ostensible normality," and post-formal thinkers/ teachers "work to create situations that bring hidden assumptions to our attention and make the tacit visible" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993, p. 306). For example, critical pedagogues/ post-formal thinkers challenge how research has been used historically to *scientifically prove* the inferiority of minority groups (Dodson, 2007; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993; Kincheloe, Steinberg, & Gresson III, 1996). Critical pedagogues not only acknowledge how teachers have used their positionalities and classroom powers to reinforce oppressive paradigms in the minds, hearts, and report cards of students; additionally, through their praxis, they work against systems of domination for the good of all students.

Research and pedagogy are shaped by people, social contexts, and institutional forces, even as they also shape people (and perceptions of people), social contexts, and institutional forces. Ladson-Billings (2000) hints at the multiple ways in which knowledge construction and research intersect by reminding us that "epistemology is more than a 'way of knowing.' An epistemology is a 'system of knowing' that has both an internal logic and external validity" (p. 257). Moreover, as pedagogues and researchers, we inform others (and ourselves), as we stand on and speak from the (mis)understandings and (mis)interpretations of our own positionalities, our own identities, and our research. In the subsequent sections, we seek to account for the complexity and diversity of identity and positionality in our own experiences as scholar-practitioners, recognizing that there are distinct similarities and differences in who we are and how we teach.

Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn: Christine's Reflection

Naming who I am as an educator and scholar is problematic. One of the reasons is because I believe that identity (whether as an educator or as a person) is fluid, multiple and dependent upon social, political, historical and cultural forces. I have been acted upon as I act upon these forces in the multiple worlds that I have lived and continue to live in. I do believe as Taylor, Tisdell and Hanley (2000) affirm that my positionality and that of the students impact the classroom dynamics and how we construct knowledge in this shared space. Though I may be perceived to have some level of power as the instructor, I am also aware that my ethnicity (coming from a different country of origin) warrants questioning regarding my capacity to understand and analyze issues of diversity and difference in foreign soil, in this case a U.S. university classroom. I also realize that how I am positioned by my students may be different from how I position myself. My ways of knowing what I know and how I utilize that knowledge is culturally nuanced by my background that has been impacted by having studied in an educational

system that still bears the markers of Britain as Kenya is a former colony. I am also aware that I may be (and often have been) viewed by students and professionals in the academy as a "native informant" who knows everything about Africa and may speak for Africans in an academic space. I therefore wrestle with my teaching within and between the intersections of who I think I am and who I am perceived to be. In this regard, Freire's concept of radical love offers me a footstool on which to stand as I enact my teaching. I accept his call to take risks in the classroom, and embrace the courage to teach (Palmer, 1998) while creating spaces of dialogue (even uncomfortable conversations).

In seeking to teach as an act of love, I conceptualize that kind of love as one that critically challenges the way we think and act by denying being a part of a dehumanizing education even when the system constantly beckons educators to be such, but instead embrace a liberatory educational practice as Freire admonishes. Indeed, love is the basis of education that seeks justice and equality for all (Kincheloe, 2008).

I embrace a love for humanity, for the students I teach, for self, and for others. I cannot have the courage to teach if I do not care enough for my students and the larger humanity whom they will impact. I understand that this is not an easy task. I must guard myself against the inflictions of fear and intimidation as an upcoming scholar-practitioner who seeks not only to unsettle issues of power and privilege within U.S. schools but to help my students understand the global world that we live in— that one nation's decisions impacts other nations as well. I therefore stretch the dismantling of issues of power and privilege in my classroom not only to reach U.S. classrooms but also to sensitize students to an awareness that we live in an interconnected world and to examine how the U.S. utilizes its international space to consider how issues such as economic trends, social ills, impacts other nations including developing nations.

I am a firm believer in co-constructing knowledge in the classroom. However, I am also aware that the ways of knowing and what we know that we bring into the classroom are sometimes problematic, especially when layered with oppressive notions, deficit thinking, and "I am better than you" attitudes. Therefore, for me embracing a pedagogy of radical love also includes helping students to analyze the roots of their knowledge basis and often times offering tools to garden different roots for what they come to believe and know about themselves, society, and the students they will teach. Hence a humanizing education must embrace a "deeply reflective interpretation of the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings" (Darder, 2009, p. 568). I am committed to this way of educating, knowing and being.

Enacting Radical Love in the Classroom

Over the course of my doctoral work, I taught a course called *Diverse Learners* to pre-service and alternative licensure teachers and a similar course as faculty to school leaders in preparation. This course was designed to provide students with a broad base of knowledge and skills that will facilitate their effectiveness in meeting the needs of diverse learners through appropriate instructional, curricular, and behavioral strategies. Students also explored diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, language, gender and exceptionalities. The majority of the students were white and came from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. I was cognizant of the complexities of teaching in a university classroom where none of the voices are silenced even when those voices are not of the majority. I concur with Montecinos (2004) who points out that instructors in teacher education programs should not simply be concerned about training white teachers to teach diverse learners. Pre-service students of color can also benefit from such courses by validating the cultural knowledge they bring and helping them translate it into a libratory pedagogy. Additionally, students from poor and working class backgrounds need to affirm their own agency even as they sometimes "express frustration, anger and sadness about the tensions they experience in trying to conform to acceptable white middle class behaviors in university settings" (hooks, 1994, p. 182). Teaching in a classroom within such complexities is not an easy venture. However, even within such complexities and tensions, I found three interrelated aspects of enacting a pedagogy of radical love that helps me to remain true to what I believe about teaching and learning and to offer pre-service teachers a classroom space where they could have the freedom and the safety to examine who they were as well as the knowledge they bring about teaching culturally, ethnically and linguistically different populations. These were building community, creating dialogic spaces, and critical reflective practice.

Building community. Building community among students is a beginning point in creating a space for enacting radical love in the classroom. Palmer (1998) with whom I concur, believes that teaching, learning, and knowing happens through a communal web of relationships. Creating a sense of community in the classroom helps the instructor to step away from the banking method of education that Freire strongly reproves of. In teaching within a community, students are regarded as a "reservoir of knowledge" and the teacher's role varies from "facilitator to co-learner" (Palmer, 1998, p. 116). Indeed, Freire believes that students and teachers simultaneously carry both embodiments. Building community helps every student to feel valued and like their experiences matter even when they are different from the majority. Second, it is also a forum to understand that the realities of lived experiences are varied both for the pre-service teachers and for the future students they will teach. It is within community that students and teachers can have authentic dialogue and that education becomes a process

of inquiry in which students and the instructors are all engaged in the process of co-constructing knowledge.

Creating Dialogic Spaces. Teacher education classrooms need to be spaces where students can question

> the omissions and tensions that exist between the master narratives and the hegemonic discourses that make up the official curriculum and the self representations of subordinated groups as they might appear in 'forgotten' or erased histories, histories, texts, memories, experiences and community narratives. (Giroux, 2005, p. 25)

Such spaces can either be in traditional classroom spaces, through electronic media, and in large or small groups. Offering students multiple spaces for dialogue has proved to be functional and constructive. For students who are less forthcoming in larger settings, they seem to find their voice in smaller groups. Additionally, online discussion groups provide forums where students can dialogue about the course material using directed prompts when they do not meet in traditional classrooms. Second, when students respond to one another through online discussions, they are able to see how their assumptions continue to be challenged from the beginning of the course to the end. Respect for all is required in these discussions. This kind of dialogue "requires an intense faith in human kind to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (Freire, 1970, p. 90).

Critical Reflective Practice. Critical reflection among pre-service educators is crucial in helping them uncover biases, assumptions and beliefs about teaching students who are culturally, ethnically and linguistically different (Howard, 2003; Miller, 2003). As an avenue to uncover their biases, beliefs and assumptions about each aspect of diversity, students respond to prompts taken from the course readings and materials. In this regard, it is important to expose pre-service educators to course materials that offer them the opportunity to understand aspects of systemic inequalities in schools and societies as well as what they can do as teachers and leaders in their classrooms, schools, and communities. Critical reflective practice in this way helps them to situate their beliefs with the current literature on aspects of diversity and to subsequently build on their own future practice in teaching and leadership.

Building community, creating dialogic spaces, and critical reflective practice cannot be treated as isolated elements of enacting the concept of radical love. Each of them enhances the others. When students feel a sense of belonging in a learning community, their uncertainties do not become barriers to learning as they discover how to challenge reductionistic notions of schooling and education.

Pedagogue as Border Crosser:
Ty's Reflection on Positionality

As a Christian, Black (African Bermudian/American), heterosexual man, I recognize that it is a privilege and responsibility to be in the academy at this time. I believe that my unique background affords me the opportunity to transcend cultural borders as an educator, researcher and scholar. Still, I recognize that I can be viewed with some degree of suspicion and distrust by those who hold different views, particularly if these views have been influenced by distasteful experiences with institutions and individuals who utilize similar labels to the ones that reflect elements of my positionality. For instance, as a Christian, I recognize that more people have been killed in the name of God than any other name; as a Black man, I also understand that despite the accomplishments of inspirational Black men like President Obama and Dr. King, Black men are still, by in large, expected to emulate the characteristics espoused by the media—criminals, athletes, and dead-beats (Gause, 2008). The image of men as egotistical, unfaithful brutes, in addition to the changing roles of men, both influence my role as an educator and researcher because they influence how I know reality; moreover, my epistemology has been shaped by socio-cultural practices and norms in Bermuda and the United States that espouse particular brands of Black masculinity. As a Black Bermudian/American male who has been afforded the opportunity to prepare educators in the United States, I am both an insider and an outsider on multiple levels—a border crosser. Still, my positionality encompasses more than my ethnic background and national affiliations.

Naming how my beliefs as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian inform and intersect with my work as a scholar-practitioner is a necessary step if I am to honestly account for my subjectivity in the classroom and define my positionality. By drawing on what some would describe as primitive Biblical principles, in one sense my positionality as a Seventh-day Adventist reflects traditional Christianity; yet, in another sense, it is far from traditional in that it espouses teachings that are no longer common in traditional or mainstream Christianity. For example, unlike many who reduce Christianity to a religion of New Testament teachings, my perspective encompasses the whole Bible as the standard for truth, hope, and wisdom in ways that many nominal Christians no longer acknowledge or accept—this includes adherence to all of the Ten Commandments. Drawing from the work of Peshkin (1988), I have determined that all of my "I"s are undergirded by my primary researcher positionality as a *non-traditional Christian intellectual*. I have determined that my other (more specific) "I"s include, but are not limited to: the non-traditional Christian Intellectual/ Witness I; the Husband and Father I; the Family/People Centered I; the Black Masculinity I; the African Bermudian/ American I; the Ethnic and International Difference I; the Border Crossing I; the Questioning of the Establishment/Authority/Status Quo I; the Respectfully

Rebellious I; and the Critically Hopeful I. All of these lenses intersect to impact my gaze and role as an educator, researcher and scholar.

Wrestling with radical love. I continue to wrestle with Freire's notion of *radical love*. I question whether the term radical love is even appropriate to use to describe our daily human interactions. My discomfort is rooted in the belief that *love* is one of the most abused concepts in the human experience. I believe the capacity to love, radically or otherwise, is a gift from God. More than that, I believe that God is love (1 John 4: 8). In fact, my initial thoughts upon hearing the term *radical love* used in an academic setting raced to reflections of Christ hanging on a cross for the sake of humans who would reject Him. In this context, Freire's notion is not radical or loving enough, I thought. Certainly, Freire wasn't asking me to give my life for someone else…or was he? My questioning of whether the term radical love was/is an appropriate describer for our daily human interactions is rooted in my belief that much of what we do as humans is actually rooted in selfishness and fear, rather than love. In spite of my initial discomfort, I began to conceptualize what *radical love* could look like in the classroom. Recognizing and respecting that individuals embrace various spiritual and existential positions, I wondered how this notion of *radical love* could be reeled in from its perch and operationalized so that it is not reduced to lofty, overstated language.

As I reflected on what I see as radical love personified—Christ's sacrifice for humanity, I was reminded that He did not simply offer Himself as *the* sacrifice; in addition, He lived a life *of* sacrifice. His life was not merely about moments. His life was devoted to ministry. Biblical record suggests that Jesus engaged in a (radical) pedagogy that challenged the religious leaders of His day and is a far cry from nominal Christianity today, where the tangible needs and pain of human beings seem to be obscured by mere church attendance, emblems on a chain, and sermonic overtures. In this context, dialogue has been replaced with dogmatism, passion for the destitute has been usurped by prejudice, and love has been kidnapped by lip-service on one extreme and legalism on the other. Sadly, some of the most damaging and divisive language runs off the lips of people who would self-identify as Christians. This pattern is typified by the disturbing billboard posted by a *Christian* minister in Kansas after the election of Barak Obama: "America, we have a Muslim president. This is a sin against the Lord." Certainly, the abuse of God and religion has caused many to echo the words of Mahatma Ghandi: "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." In this light, I realized that the challenge to operationalize *radical love* is a personal one: I reflected on my praxis. Pedagogically speaking, I thought about what sacrificing my life for my students looks like. Ultimately, I sought a balanced interpretation of *radical love* as a pedagogical imperative for all educators, understanding and respecting that there are a variety of life philosophies, spiritual traditions, existential allegiances, and belief systems that inform how we think,

feel, act, and teach: some choose to eschew any notion of faith; others aim to live a life of faith; and still others operate on a continuum somewhere in-between. For Freire (1970), faith in humanity (along with an abiding trust and hope) is critical to our capacity for dialogue.

Radical love, Radical pedagogy

Teaching a course for undergraduate pre-service teachers on the "institution of education" and similar graduate courses for school leaders has allowed me to enact *radical love*, engage in radical pedagogy, and reflect on my positionality and responsibility as an educator. As I engaged in these processes, I was encouraged by the work of scholars like Freire (1970), Dillard (2000), West (1982, 1993), Dantley (2005), and hooks (1994), who (in their own ways) name how spirituality undergirds who they are and the risks they take for the sake of the educational advancement of their students. Even now, as an emerging scholar who sees spirituality as central to my work in the academy, I can relate to the "spiritual crisis" and tensions Cozart (2010) experienced as a result of her "belief that spirituality was a separate layer of marginalization, separate from race and gender…[which caused her to act] as if spirituality was a third consciousness, rather than part of my merging double-consciousness into a better truer self" (p. 253). Like Cozart, I have no desire to live, teach or lead from such an oppressive paradigm, even as I embrace the inherent risks that emerge anytime one names her/his positionality. I understand and embrace these risks, knowing that, at times, it feels easier and safer to discuss issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the academy than it does to dialogue about issues of spirituality. Clearly, there are a number of reasons that can account for this reality, including the tendency and tensions created by the conflation of spirituality with religion and religious experiences (Cozart, 2010; Dantley, 2005; Douglas & Peck, 2013), respect for separation of church and state legislation, and the personal nature of spirituality. Frankly, to encourage dialogue and investigation around issues of spirituality is risqué – radical even. To be clear, I feel the tension now as I attempt to articulate some of the strategies I utilize in my classroom. Still, I draw strength from my commitment to my students and my praxis, understanding that, there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred

> …our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.   (hooks, 1994, p. 13)

More than that, I teach, lead, and live by the mantra that "perfect love casteth out all fear" (1 John 4: 18) or in the words of Freire (1970), "love is an act of courage, not fear…. a commitment to others…. [and] to the cause of liberation" (p. 78).

Going beyond 'middle people.' Many of my students have expressed their discomfort and fear of discussing topics like religion/ spirituality in their other course experiences. Colleagues who embrace various religious/ spiritual traditions have expressed similar sentiments to me. Having taught in somewhat conservative communities, including areas in the Bible-belt, I understand that many of my students enter my classroom with prior knowledge and experiences with some form of religion. Ironically, this topic is rarely broached within the context of their identities as educators and individuals who wrestle with their beliefs.

In my classroom, I emphasize the importance of dialogue, recognizing that it is a means through which transformation can begin, relationships are developed, and mutual respect is forged. I also emphasize the importance of reading and researching primary documents for ourselves. For example, we discuss how religion—particularly Christianity in the U.S.—has been abused and used as a means of oppression and domination. My students are usually astounded by what they learn about Christopher Columbus and his disturbing exploits in the name of God (Loewen, 2007). As students try to reconcile the purpose for and means by which they will teach their students about Columbus (in light of their new knowledge), they are also challenged with the reality that most school textbooks herald Christopher Columbus as a brilliant hero. These revelations and discussions often propel students to declare: "what else haven't we been told and why have these truths been kept from us?" Through various exercises and activities, I challenge students to research and consider contemporary manifestations of these dynamics, particularly as it relates to textbooks. In this context, spiritual/biblical texts are textbooks. Students are encouraged to bypass the "middle people" (my gender-sensitive adaption of "the middle men")—i.e. teachers, pastors, rabbis, bishops, priests—in order to engage in their own study of primary and secondary documents. Students are encouraged to dialogue with the documents in whatever manner they deem appropriate: listening, responding, contesting, interrogating, meditating, and praying are options that some students utilize to dialogue with the documents. I give no parameters for how students should engage in this research, except that they look at the documents for themselves and allow their previously held perspectives to be challenged. For me, this is not a sneaky evangelistic strategy. This is about encouraging future teachers to develop the agency to challenge paradigms and institutions, understanding that the schoolhouse is not the only *institution of education* (Douglas, in press; Douglas & Peck, 2013; Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglas, 2013).

Students often research common assumptions that are grounded in historical, political, and religious traditions: for example, students are often amazed when they uncover that the history of Sunday observance as the Sabbath is rooted in the dictates of Emperor Constantine and the Roman Catholic Church, rather than the Bible. Other students challenge the history and validity of the Bible,

and discussions about whether there are actually lost books of the Bible or who actually wrote the Bible become platforms for deeper dialogue and inquiry into power, language, positionality, and institutions (of education). We also reflect on how racism is institutionally perpetuated in religious settings today; for example, we challenge what Black church/ White church dichotomies reveal about humanity and the Christian church. We question children's literature that portrays angels as exclusively White and male. We look at gender roles—in particular, the oppression of women in some biblical cartoon portrayals. We also interrogate the assumption that America is a Christian nation. These activities push students to reflect on their individual and collective identities, their positionalities, and the implications these dynamics have for their praxis.

Fear factor. When students first walk into my classroom, I sense that they bring with them many fears. Some are afraid to fail; some are afraid to talk; some are afraid to sound obtuse, while others seem to be afraid of each other…or at least afraid to talk to each other; then there are those who appear to be afraid of me, in the sense that I am the one who supposedly holds the power. As an instructor who hasn't forgotten what it feels like to be a student, I have come to know many of these fears all too well. As I help my students unpack these dynamics throughout the semester, it also becomes clear that most of these pre-service teachers and leaders are also afraid of not being in *control* of their students or the learning process. For many of these future teachers and leaders, to be publically challenged by a student or to not know the *correct answer* to a student's question is an unpardonable sin. For me, *radical love* demands that I challenge these fears and help them to relinquish the belief that they can actually control the learning process or the learning spaces that function beyond the walls of their classrooms.

Learning from community-based pedagogical spaces. Teachers, administrators, and policy makers continue to ignore the impact of non-school based educative locales on students. Community-based pedagogical spaces are "non-school based locales, institutions, forces, or methods that have been/ are utilized for educational purposes," such as the media, music, churches, barbershops, hair salons, sports clubs/fields, and theaters (Douglas, in press; Douglas & Gause, 2009; Douglas & Peck, 2013). Drawing on the tradition of historical scholarship and the works of Freire (1970) and Cremin (1970, 1980, 1988), scholars who embrace the breadth of what it means to educate, I utilize a community-based pedagogical space assignment to encourage students to talk to people and learn from spaces outside of traditional classrooms. Pre-service teachers and leaders are challenged to consider where and how learning takes place. Much like educators fear losing control in their classrooms or not knowing a correct answer, there also seems to be a fear of acknowledging or embracing the educative power of spaces outside of the schoolhouse. As an act of radical love, this is a fear that I try to dismantle and challenge in my work with pre-service teachers.

As I challenge my students to face the fear and contradictions of lived experiences inside and outside of the classroom, I simultaneously challenge them to reflect on the risks that will be necessary if they are to share a sense of hope through their pedagogy and leadership. The outcomes of these processes are not always fully apparent to me. I often remind my students that *the process is more important than the product; in fact, the process is the product*. Often, the fruits of the process are readily apparent in students who exit the course more committed to a social justice agenda. Ultimately though, this process-based approach is rooted in the hope and faith that I have in my students to continue the inquiry process that is promoted in my class. Where the journey leads them is beyond my influence and jurisdiction. My responsibility is to give them tools and opportunities to challenge oppressive systems and ideals. It's a process that I continue to engage in personally. Even as I participate in and name particular positionalities, systems and ideologies, my position as a non-traditional Christian intellectual is not a passive one: I am willing to name and challenge "injustice anywhere," recognizing that it is always "a threat to justice everywhere" (King, 1963, p. 1854).

Conclusion: Radical Love as Process and Product

Enacting radical love in our classrooms has become a way to take risks in having conversations about the socio-cultural dynamics imbedded in our positionalities, our identities as instructors, and the positionalities and identities of our students. It is an approach in our teaching that helps us to stay true to the ideals of critical pedagogical approaches, while still modeling a more humanizing way of teaching and learning for our students. As leaders of pre-service teachers, we believe that: *having a position* is expected; *knowing* your position is important; *naming* one's positions is vital, but *critically reflecting* on how your *havings*, *knowings*, and *namings* may impact your interactions with students is the difference between preparing to teach/lead and preparing to be an anti-oppressive pedagogue and leader who will radically love all students.

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Christine and I hold similar beliefs as it relates to navigating the nuances of our positionalities, epistemology, and enacting radical love in our classrooms – namely, through building community, creating dialogic spaces, critical reflective practice, demonstrating a sincere respect for humanity and the world. For the sake of offering a broader context for considering how positionality and radical love intersect, I have focused less on my identity/ experiences as a scholar with an international background. Instead, I have chosen to build on the foundation Christine has established in order to share other ways that radical love informs my praxis, rather than simply echoing her sentiments.

Admittedly, the ways in which Christine and I experience our internationalized identities (and specifically, our blackness) in the classroom are not identical. For example, I have found that my Bermudian accent—which much like Bermuda's geopolitical history, is a unique blend of English, Caribbean, and American culture—is often privileged over many other Caribbean or African accents. I often suggest to my students that the privileging of my accent may be rooted in the fact that the Bermudian accent sounds more British than African, and is thus more aligned with a Eurocentric paradigm. Raising this point in our class discussions gives my students the opportunity to unpack how we stereotype and judge others based on the accoutrements of appearance and accents. Students from the South often confess their own prejudices about Northern accents and Northerners often speak about common perceptions of the "southern drawl." Ultimately, these discussions give students opportunities to interrogate who is perceived as intelligent, who are the insiders, who are the marginalized, and what/whose standards or norms are used to make these determinations?

Whether or not students are afraid of me because I am a Black man is not an argument that I will take up at this time. Though most students admit that I am the first Black male instructor that they have had in university (and some in their entire schooling experience), it is not always clear to me how this particular aspect of my positionality affects how my students view me. After I introduce myself and—via my different accent—

destabilize the assumption that I am an African American Black man, interesting opportunities begin to open up that I gladly employ in order to probe some of the intra-cultural dynamics of identity.