

# A THEORY TO PRACTICE EXPLORATION OF FREIRE'S PEDAGOGICAL LOVE IN P-12 AND HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

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## *A ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION*

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## *EXTENDED ABSTRACT*

Freire's pedagogical love is a highly valuable, but under-researched, topic in education. This approach is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century model suitable for *all* levels of learners—from prekindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup>-grade (P-12), as well as all forms of adult and higher educational learning. This roundtable discussion explores Freire's pedagogical *love* as a means of deeper and more meaningful instruction, which encourages critical thinking, and inventive 21<sup>st</sup>-century knowledge and skills. Two of Freire's works are sources for the concept of pedagogical love—*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness*. We pose one tentative research question that asks, "How does Freirean pedagogical love manifests as parts of teachers' beliefs, practices, and students' transformative educational outcomes?" This work connects to previous ones on Freirean pedagogical love in Smith-Campbell, Littles, and West (2015); Smith-Campbell, and Littles (2016); and Smith-Campbell (2017).

Since Freire's ideas were not developed for 21<sup>st</sup>-century United States P-12 realities, we juxtaposed them against Dewey (1916) that highlights the sociopolitical value of education, as well as best instructional practices and learning outcomes. A robust body of work exists, which indicates similarities between these two thinkers' on education. Use of Dewey's ideas successfully places Freire's ideas in both P-12 and higher education—despite significant differences in the ontological realities and outcomes envisioned by each.

Freire's works on pedagogical love is epistemologically located within the field of critical social justice education theory (CSJET). Pedagogical love, as Nieto (2008); and Darder (2017); Smith-Campbell, Littles and West (2015); Smith-Campbell and Littles (2016); and Smith-Campbell (2017) point out, is not just cognitively valuable, but also socio-politically liberative, and transformative. It has goals, associated with social justice and equity, and is supportive of creating citizens capable of sustaining authentic-ever-evolving 21<sup>st</sup>-century democracies. Like CSJET and Freire's beliefs, this paper asserts that education is neither neutral nor inert—that education involves intentional and often hidden agendas.

We assert that education is a human right, a humanizing force, and a human need as indicated in Freire; in Dewey's, *Democracy and Education*; Foshay's, *The Curriculum Matrix*; in the United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; and the United Nation's educational, scientific, and cultural organization, *The Right to Education*. Denial of a type of education called for by Freire's pedagogical love is a human rights violation, a deprivation of a basic human need, and dehumanizing.

Interview information from our research indicates that both higher and P-12 educators' beliefs and instructional practices were congruent with Freire ideas on pedagogical love—that teachers at both levels shared a great "passion" for education, practicing within contexts supportive of transformative and humanizing social justice realities and outcomes. That learning was collaborative, dialogic, and one in

which teachers learned *with* students, as Freire asserts. The higher education professor recalled relationships with students as ones “between equals,” as Freire argues. The higher education professor said, “*I don’t feel that there is a power level, some of that has diminished with the doc student.*” The P-12 student participant made similar statements.

Another theme emerging from both higher education and P-12 transformative outcomes, relates to teachers providing life-changing experiences that transferred across generations. A higher education student recalled the professor explaining that, “*the problem in this world is that people don’t value the humanness in other people.*” The student said, “*It was one of the most profound thing in my life because I’ve never thought of life and relationships that way before....and I passed it on to my children.*” A similar case emerged when the P-12 participant said, “*I can now see the impact that she [the teacher] had on me, choosing a career, continuing service...my 15-year-old started a charity two years ago.*” These statements reflect transformative lessons learned and passed on as legacies from teachers to students, and then to students’ children in a regenerative manner.

This paper is ongoing, and limitations include small sample size,  $N = < 7$ , and localized participant selected pool utilized. Room for further research on the Freirean pedagogical love exists, and this paper is but a small and very limited start.

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