



Considering love: Implications for critical political psychology

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ABSTRACT

Within psychology, love is typically understood in fundamentally psychological terms. Even those critical psychologists who have interrogated the sociopolitical dimensions of love seem unable to break from conceptions of love as romantic, familial, and/or private. In this article, I argue that in understanding love as a disposition, rather than a feeling, political psychologists are able to bring nuance to mainstream psychology's engagement with the emancipatory potentialities of love while, simultaneously, instating a critical reorientation of political psychology. To this end, I offer two pathways through which political psychologists can work with love: rooting counter-hegemonies in the love ethic, and enunciating love knowledges across contexts. I conclude by reflecting on future directions for critical political psychologists who are concerned with a multifaceted, materialist, psychopolitical and contextually-bound notion of love.

1. Introduction

The conceptual slipperiness of love, as well as its connotations of sentimentality, make it an unpopular area of academic inquiry. In psychology, love has - for the most part - been conceptualised as a heteronormative phenomenon, confined to the private spheres of people's lives (Thorne, Hegarty, & Hepper, 2019). Those psychologists who have attempted to examine the political consequences of love appear unable to break entirely from the perception of love as a romantic and/or sexual phenomenon (Fromm, 1962; Kousteni & Anagnostopoulos, 2020; Yep, Lovaas, & Elia, 2003). This is to say, within much of psychology, love and its liberatory potentialities are understood primarily in relation to the psychological. However, because love is always (re)made under particular sociopolitical conditions for purposes of care, commitment, exploitation, pleasure, social reproduction, resistance and torment (Barthes, 1990; Lanas & Zembylas, 2015; Freire, 1972; Hardt & Negri, 2017; hooks, 2000), it is surely a political concept inasmuch as it is a psychological one.

In considering love's psychopolitical valances, Eagleton (2003, p. 131) defines love as a radical "openness to the needs of others" and the self in the context of others. Wherever possible, love's radical openness gives equal priority to the interconnected needs of the self and others. Love, therefore, does not only encompass care, nonprejudice, concern, or affection. It also harnesses a range of affects and actions in seeing to the needs of others and the self. Indeed, for Eagleton (2003), within love's purview, the flourishing of one individual is dependent on and

necessitated by the flourishing of all. As such, it is because of our common humanity, as well as our embeddedness within a mutualist society, that the needs of the self are understood as connected to and formed through the needs of others (see Butler, 2020). Yet, because we realise love through relational and material means, the activation of love depends on social conditions that enable each individual to attend to the needs of others and the self. This renders love a political imperative. Those who build and fight for the conditions necessary for love are, indeed, acting with the needs of the self and others in mind. In this sense, attending to love represents the exertion of individual agency within particular sociohistorical circumstances, rendering love central to both the processes and products of social justice efforts.

Working from Eagleton's (2003) formulation of love, I argue that love comprises both an ethic and a set of knowledges. I understand the love ethic as a set of ideas and related actions which are directed towards what loving social conditions *ought to be* (see hooks, 2000). For instance, those engaged in struggles for reproductive rights, shorter workdays, higher wages and antiracism are all, in some sense, concerned with the love ethic. The love ethic is not, however, comprised of static content. Rather, through experiences of and struggles with love, we acquire different contextually-bound love knowledges (see Sandoval, 2000). These love knowledges are often habitual, unsaid and 'everyday', meaning that they are not always readily symbolised. If love knowledges are to be incorporated into the love ethic, then we must learn to enunciate these knowledges, which is to say that we can only begin to learn from and transfer love knowledges if they are utterable (see Fournet,

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2011). For example, although we may care for our comrades with whom we struggle, we do not necessarily reflect on how we enact such care, or the barriers that we face when caring. It is when we articulate our caring actions by symbolising them through language that they become a kind of knowledge from which we can learn.

In this article, I make the case for engaging seriously with Eagleton's (2003) definition of love in the field of political psychology. I posit that although there is relatively little political psychology work that looks to understand social justice with and through love knowledges and the love ethic, political psychologists are well-suited to developing an understanding of love's emancipatory potential. I claim that, in a dialectical move, when political psychologists concern themselves with love in contexts of political resistance and solidarity-making, they can bring nuance to mainstream psychology's conceptualisations of love while, simultaneously, infusing political psychology with a commitment to emancipatory resistance politics. In this regard, I attempt not only to take seriously love as such, but to also take seriously the radical possibilities of love, and how these have been co-opted and/or subdued within and beyond psychology.

In what follows, I begin by outlining love's psychopolitical constitution. Following Wittgenstein (1967), I posit that love as a disposition - rather than a feeling - intersects with neoliberal capitalism and collective anti-capitalist resistance in particular ways. I proceed by considering the progressive but limited ways by which psychology in the main has approached the political dimensions of love. Then, after offering some critique of mainstream political psychology, I develop two pathways through which critical political psychologists can work with love's psychopolitical character, namely, rooting counter-hegemonies in the love ethic, and enunciating love knowledges across contexts. In conclusion, I reflect on the implications of this work, as well as the future directions for critical political psychologists concerned with love.

2. The psychopolitical constitution of love

Hook (2004) defines psychopolitics as understanding psychology and politics through the registers of one another. Psychopolitical engagements can avail insights into how politics impact psychological functioning, as well as how politics become entrenched at the level of individual psychology. With respect to progressive politics, Hook (2004) argues that psychology of a certain kind can be put to political work so that we may use psychology *with* politics as means of consolidating psychosocial emancipation through collective resistance. However, bringing psychology into the realm of progressive politics risks neutering radical resistance efforts by psychologising and even pathologising their political ambitions (Parker, 2007). For instance, psychologists can temper the effectiveness of activists' politically dissident action by treating such action as psychological maladjustment, rather than a reaction to systemic injustice. Thus, rather than apply psychological theory to politics, a progressive psychopolitics should attempt to harness emerging political concepts within psychological work so that psychology is led by liberatory political formations (Parker, 2015). In guarding against predetermined psychological concepts being imposed onto progressive political actors, our psychological praxis should be guided by the emancipatory concerns, affective registers, discursive categories, and subject positions of these actors.

It is with all of this in mind that I attempt in this section to map the psychopolitical constitution of love. More specifically, through a reflexive position, I explore the emancipatory, banal and oppressive functionalities of love under capitalism. Such a position derives from a more general concern with how affect and action coalesce in grassroots political struggles (see Malherbe, 2020b). I would wish for this article to be considered with respect to the insights it may offer to political struggle, rather than it be assessed against 'objective' theoretical criteria.

2.1. Love as a disposition

Speaking to the philosophy of psychology, Wittgenstein remarks that "Love is not a feeling. Love is put to the test, pain not. One does not say: 'That was not true pain, or it would not have gone off so quickly'" (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 504). For Wittgenstein, we do not *feel* love in the way that we experience emotions like anger, sadness or pain. Love is not, in other words, as fleeting as that which is primarily *felt*. Thus, we can understand love as a disposition that influences how we act, feel, and determine value in accordance with fulfilling human need (Eagleton, 2016). Put differently, the love disposition refers to an openness to enact, enunciate, attend to, and perceive love (i.e. the love ethic and love knowledges). The love disposition is, therefore, made manifest through action, knowledge and ethics. This renders love a social phenomenon (Badiou, 2009), meaning that it is perhaps not accurate to say that one falls in love. Rather, we consciously stand in it (Fromm, 1962).

Far from idle sentiment (see Freire, 1972; Rose, 2018), love avails a fundamentally participatory materiality which points towards a reality that exists (and that is made) beyond the ego (Eagleton, 2016; hooks, 2000). Hence, to love only a single object while remaining indifferent to the world resembles an ego-driven mode of symbiotic attachment (i.e. a kind of anti-ethics) more than it does love proper (see Fromm, 1962). As Badiou (2009, p. 104) writes, "To love is to struggle, beyond solitude, with everything in the world that can animate existence". In this way, love is located at the intersection of what the collective can physically achieve and what it psychologically desires (see Badiou, 2009). This can certainly take on destructive formations, such as when hate groups demonise outgroups by invoking their love of an ingroup (Ahmed, 2015). However, when we take seriously the Marxian dictum that the free development of each must serve as the condition for the free development of all (see Eagleton, 2003), we are willed towards a kind of humanity which, Hardt and Negri (2004) argue, is the ultimate act of love. Although the needs of the individual are not, in every instance, identical with those of the collective (e.g. the educational needs that I require to perform my particular vocation are different to the political education that a citizenry needs to collectively participate in a democratic society), there is an awareness within the love disposition of how the individual's needs connect with those of the group (e.g. the manner by which my vocation feeds into and is affected by broader society). Love approaches individual freedoms as predicated on the freedom of all (West & Ritz, 2009). If I am connected to others through a common humanity as well as the mutualist constitution of the social world, then the oppression of one is at once the oppression of all (Butler, 2020). Therefore, standing in love facilitates a collective consciousness (i.e. an orientation towards justice as an ethical and humanist imperative), whereby the individual feels an intense belonging to and responsibility for the world (Freire, 1972), rather than the world belonging to or being responsible for us (Berlant, 2011).

2.2. Love and capital

It has been argued by several critical theorists that capitalism structurally limits our capacity to stand in love (see, e.g., Badiou, 2009; Eagleton, 2003; Fromm, 1962; Hardt & Negri, 2017; hooks, 2000; Sandoval, 2000; Ureña, 2017). Under capitalism, dispositional forms of being - such as love - are denigrated to having, with value assigned to that which is privately owned (Hardt & Negri, 2004). Thus, in what Taylor (1988) refers to as territorial functioning, the sentiments, affects and cognitions associated with love become entwined with maintaining property. In this regard, the love ethic and love knowledges come to mimic property relations (Berlant, 2011), with successful love equated to ownership of a loved object (Hardt & Negri, 2017). Love is, in this way, utilised to foster "the subject's investment in capitalist relations of production" (McGowan, 2016, p. 177). Similarly, a capitalist love ethic requires marketing the self (e.g. through online dating websites, dating apps, or 'personal ads') wherein one's instrumentality is made salient (i.

e. what is it that someone will obtain from loving me). Following this, capitalism offers commodity fetishism (including love as a commodity) as a suitable surrogate to the love disposition (hooks, 2000). In short, capitalism attempts to thrust loving social relations into the realm of financialised commodities (see Badiou, 2009; McGowan, 2016), with the collective enterprise of building the love ethic made to appear as a wholly private affair.

The precarity of life under capitalism can lead people to seek out forms of love that seem familiar, and therefore safe, which can mean confining the love ethic to existing capitalist socioeconomic relations and their attendant ideologies (see Butler, 2020). Accordingly, in her engagement with Hardt's (2011) work, Berlant (2011) notes that capitalism fosters within us a love of the same, that is, a 'bad love' which is parochial, closed, reactionary and narcissistic (e.g. right-wing nationalism). Bad love is, however, a relational notion, and can only function by blocking off 'good love' which, according to Berlant (2011) and Hardt (2011), is expansive, transformative, generative, open to difference, and signifies collective and individual transformation (see also Lanas & Zembylas, 2015). Good love emphasises similarities - rather than differences - between the self and the Other with a view towards building care and solidarity between these parties (see Malherbe, 2020b). We might say that good love represents an event that, although embedding itself in the everyday, does not necessarily cohere with the capitalist social order (Badiou, 2009). Although love is not *de facto* opposed to a capitalist political economy, its existence is also not premised on capitalism. Indeed, when pressed up against neoliberal capitalism's instrumentalist metrics, good love can seem useless (see Barthes, 1990; Eagleton, 2003). Yet, it is because good love is not ontologically invested in the capitalist modalities of competition, production, distribution and consumption in the same way that bad love is that people are not incentivised (or even afforded the necessary time that is required) to work on the art of sustaining good love (Fromm, 1962). Good love is made extracurricular, and instead of standing in it, we are led to accept that we can only ever seek out fleeting moments of such love (Monzó & McLaren, 2014).

2.3. Love and collective resistance

Although the love ethic does not offer social movements any kind of coherence, let alone a political programme or ideology (Eagleton, 2003), it can drive our political engagements (Wilkinson, 2017). In his often recited aphorism, Cornel West claims that if justice is what love looks like in public, deep democracy is what justice looks like in practice (West & Ritz, 2009). It follows, then, that if good love cannot thrive in cultures of domination and capitalist competition (hooks, 2000), then a politics that is attuned to good love necessitates transformative - even risky - political engagements that loosen our attachments to this world so that we can begin building a new society that is more conducive to love (Badiou, 2009; Freire, 1972; Hardt, 2011). It is this transformative element of love that is effectively eviscerated when love is made into a capitalistic commodity (McGowan, 2016).

We should not deceive ourselves into thinking that a loving disposition can solve the problem of struggling alongside comrades whom we do not love, or even like (Badiou, 2009). Yet, like Butler (2020), I do not believe that love is a precondition for meaningful political solidarity. Incentives to enact a *politics of love* seem to be the least tenable of humanisms (Ahmed, 2015). We may, however, be compelled to work with others to build a society premised on the material and relational requirements of love; a society in which the individual's assumption of the love disposition is structurally supported (West & Ritz, 2009). Within the context of collective struggle, love can modulate our various sensitivities towards the needs of ourselves and others at interpersonal and structural levels. Therefore, if, *a la* power basis theory, we understand power as the ability to meet people's needs (see Pratto, Lee, Tan, & Pitpitan, 2011), then love becomes an important concept when working with people to advance popular power through grassroots or community

movements. Love can assist us in clarifying, identifying, connecting, and acting towards the needs of the self and others within these movements. This does not mean that interpersonal tensions within movement politics (e.g. differences in political goals and expectations) should be overlooked when building popular power. We should not, in other words, understand love as necessarily facilitating joyful affect within political struggle. Love is oftentimes arrived at through feelings of rage, pain, guilt, fear, disappointment and even loathing - all of which are instrumental in social change initiatives, where loss, shame and discomfort will need to be experienced by certain groups (Wilkinson, 2017).

2.4. The tyrannies of love

Feminists have long noted the kinds of violence and domination which women have experienced in the name of supposedly romantic and/or sexual love (e.g. hooks, 2000; Wilkinson, 2017). This is observed when abusers describe their enactment of intimate partner violence as an act of love, or when mothers are compelled to love their children at the expense of their own well-being (Rose, 2018). Love can also be used to assert particular affective ideals that serve as 'tests' for one's acceptance into a racial and patriarchal capitalist social order (Ahmed, 2015; Wilkinson, 2017). For example, although loving one's family through emotional labour is socially sanctioned, expressing love through collective strike action is not. Love can also function in the service of coloniality, whereby imperialist logic works to exoticise and fetishise colonised peoples for purposes of subjugation and oppression (Ureña, 2017). Additionally, we see love rhetoric being used to justify oppressive labour practices. The neoliberal dictum "do what you love" obscures anti-capitalist solidarity and the fact that one's work ultimately benefits a capitalist market economy (Tokumitsu, 2015). As highlighted in the well-known slogan of the International Wages for Housework Campaign, "They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work" (Federici, 1975, p. 74), unwaged reproductive labour - which, under patriarchal capitalism, is usually undertaken by women - is oftentimes recast as "love" rather than work proper (see also Malherbe, 2020b). In each of these instances, the compulsion to love forces people to endure what they should not have to (Wilkinson, 2017).

There are also a host of problems that accompany centralising dispositional good love within collective resistance efforts. Indeed, loving dispositions differ from person to person (e.g. when one is systematically denied love, their proclivity to stand in love is diminished, see Gerhardt, 2004). Furthermore, it remains unclear how - or if - currents of domination are accounted for in social movements that seek to enact good love (see Wilkinson, 2017). Claiming a monopoly on good, or indeed good political love, can sustain oppressive social relations within social movements by ostracising those who do not conform to good love as it has been defined by movement leaders (Laurie & Stark, 2017). In critiquing Hardt's (2011) work, Wilkinson (2017) notes that the togetherness facilitated by good love can represent danger for - and/or diminish the power of - marginalised groups. For some, because survival is so precarious to begin with, the risk of love is too great. Additionally, Wilkinson (2017) argues that Hardt's (2011) denigration of bad love overlooks how identity-based social movements have, throughout history, represented a radical kind of safety for oppressed peoples. These movements, she writes, have opened up space for multiple forms of engagement across difference, and have served as a platform for imagining relationality and emancipation outside of the self.

I wish to emphasise that the critique of good and bad love does not dispel or discredit the usefulness of these terms. Recognising the pitfalls and usefulness of - as well as the porous borders between - the good and bad elements of love can assist us in making clear the limits of the political and social value of love as a multifarious disposition that is always *in situ*. It is not inevitable that love will collapse into self-interest, governance and/or neoliberal hermeneutics, but the potential for it to do so requires vigilance on the part of those seeking to harness an emancipatory love ethic in their political engagements. If good love is to

be a “mess-making force [whose] aim is to dissolve toxic sureties” (Berlant, 2011, p. 685), it can only be sustained through movement and growth (Fromm, 1962), meaning that our embrace of, or resistance to, love should be undertaken with an awareness of the ever-shifting requirements of liberation.

Although far from complete, I have attempted here to map some of the salient ways by which love is constituted psychopolitically. It follows, then, that being attentive to love’s psychopolitical constitution is imperative for those psychologists who are concerned with love. In the next section, I assess how psychologists have responded to this task.

3. Psychological engagements with love as a political concept

Thorne et al. (2019) recount that since the 1970s, most psychological research in the United States has theorised love as a primarily romantic, universal concept. The focus of this research has, however, shifted throughout the decades. In the 1970s, psychologists tended to approach love through a behaviourist lens, whereas in the 1980s, a cognitive and developmental focus was adopted. Later, in the 1990s, psychological research on love placed its analytical accent on culture and personality, and from the 2000s, gender became the primary focus of this research (see Thorne et al., 2019). Throughout this history, critical psychology has always led the way in understanding the politics of love. Indeed, in harnessing politically progressive concepts and theories, such as queer theory, ethical non-monogamy, and radical polyamory (see, e.g., Conley, Piemonte, Gusakova, & Rubin, 2018; Kousteni & Anagnostopoulos, 2020; Thorne et al., 2019; Yep et al., 2003), critical psychological research has sought to develop nuanced understandings of love *in situ*. However, in much of this research, love remains a fundamentally interpersonal or private phenomenon whose political implications are contingent on, and ultimately debased by, more readily acceptable political arenas (e.g. gender, culture, human behaviour). The sociopolitical contours of love are typically understood by critical psychologists as projections of - or deviations from - individualised, romantic and/or sexual formations of love. This is to say that although critical psychologists have usefully engaged with the emancipatory elements of love on the interpersonal level, particularly in relation to stigma and prejudice, psychology has rarely been used to understand the liberatory potential of love in contexts of political resistance and solidarity-making.

Psychology’s neglect of love’s emancipatory potential in the political arena is especially curious in the field of political psychology, which is concerned with bridging political and psychological theory (Tileagă, 2013), including the role that emotions and affective dispositions play in politics (see Brader & Marcus, 2013; Clarke, Hoggett, Thompson, 2006; Leach, 2016). Nonetheless, there is a small body of political psychological research literature that has sought to interrogate love in the political sphere. There are studies which draw critically on psychopolitical conceptions of love to understand ingroup-outgroup relations (Brandt & Reyna, 2014; Brewer, 1999; Eastwick, Richeson, Son, & Finkel, 2009), hate groups (Ahmed, 2015), motherhood (Rose, 2018), desire under capitalism (McGowan, 2016), nonviolence (Butler, 2020), and the role of emotions in the functioning of the liberal State (Nussbaum, 2013). Perhaps the most well-known critical treatise of love by a political psychologist remains Fromm’s (1962) bestselling *The Art of Loving*, wherein Freud’s (2007) work is drawn upon to argue that the love disposition is never spontaneous. It is, rather, an artform whose development depends on egalitarian social conditions. Although unable to entirely depart from some of the heteronormative currents that undergird Freud’s (1930, 2007) oeuvre, Fromm’s (1962) work presents an early attempt to use psychology in conjunction with critical theory to analyse love.

It is the purpose of this article to argue for the dialectical possibilities of a political psychology concerned with love. Through its various idiosyncratic insights, political psychology can contribute to our understanding of love’s emancipatory potential. At the same time, political psychologists may harness love’s psychopolitical properties to instigate

a critical reorientation of political psychology itself. Situating this fruitful exchange between political psychology and love, however, requires that we outline some of the gaps and recent developments within political psychology.

4. Political psychology: critique and opportunity

Critical political psychologists are increasingly concerned with understanding how political systems impact psychological functioning and social movements (see Decety & Yoder, 2016; Hasan-Aslih et al., 2019; Leach, 2016; Rucker, Galinsky, & Magee, 2018). This work has convincingly called for political psychology and related disciplines to abandon value-neutrality (see, e.g., Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008; Walsh & Gokani, 2014). However, such critical work remains marginal. Parker (2015) has argued that a lot of political psychology reduces politics to psychology and does not take seriously human agency and interaction (exceptions here include Malherbe, 2020b; Rucker et al., 2018). Tileagă (2013) similarly insists that universalist approaches dominate the field at the expense of specific, contingent, contradictory, ambiguous and relativistic meaning-making practices and behaviours (but see Abrams, Houston, Van de Vyver, & Vasiljevic, 2015; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). In this regard, Moane (2006) has noted that political psychology has, in large part, neglected feminist insights into the emancipatory potential inherent to connecting the personal with the political (however, see Butler, 2020; Rose, 2018; Thorne et al., 2019). The field’s reliance on statistics and surveys tends to confine politics to partisanship, voting, political affiliation and governmental action (Montero, 1997), thereby limiting the very idea of politics to the bureaucratic processes in which ‘good citizens’ participate (see Parker, 2015; Tileagă, 2013). Although there are exceptions here (see Clarke et al., 2006; Gokani & Walsh, 2014; Hasan-Aslih et al., 2019; Malherbe, 2020b; Tileagă, 2013), it is only in more recent years that political psychologists have taken seriously political formations which occur outside of formalised, State-centric apparatuses (e.g. protests, social movements, wildcat strike action, prefigurative politics).

Montero (2015) highlights that many peer-reviewed journals insist that political psychologists make their claims in a neutral tone. As a result, political psychology has played a role in legitimising social change only when this change reflects a liberal ‘balance of opinions’, wherein left and right politics (usually made to seem like two extreme sides of the same coin) reach a consensus in the political centre (Parker, 2007). Thus, behind a lot of mainstream political psychology’s supposed neutrality is a reflection of the dominant political culture in which such psychology is practised (Malherbe, 2020a; Parker, 2007). This is not, however, to discount explicitly partisan political psychology work (e.g. Butler, 2020; Malherbe, 2020b; Walsh & Gokani, 2014), but to highlight that those involved in resistance politics proper are regularly pathologised within political psychology discourse, and made to seem abnormal or the product of ‘negative thinking’ (Parker, 2015). Therefore, despite critical work being undertaken in the field, a lot of political psychology continues to lend scientific credence to oppressive social and political norms (Montero, 1997; Tileagă, 2013).

Parker (2007) insists that critical political psychology should concern itself not only with the mental activity of individuals, but also with exploring why certain counter-cultural activities and political actions are pathologised by mainstream political psychology. In addition, then, to challenging the kinds of negative internalisation which take place under racial and patriarchal capitalism, critical political psychology should look to interrogate dominant ideologies for the purpose of building counter-hegemonies (Malherbe, 2020a). This may well entail working with those involved in the sorts of collective resistance efforts (e.g. lockouts, demonstrations, protests) which are coded as violent by elites to secure the State’s monopoly on violence (see Butler, 2020). Critical political psychologists are thereby urged to abandon false pretences of neutrality by aligning their psychological practices with an emancipatory political agenda.

Within much mainstream political psychology, many of psychology's individualising tendencies are harnessed to engage parochial definitions of politics under the guise of impartiality. A lot of political psychologists continue to describe what social and political mechanisms mean to them, rather than to the majority of political actors who participate in, shape, and resist these mechanisms (Tileagă, 2013). Accordingly, there have been attempts by critical political psychologists to act with and for progressive political movements (Malherbe, 2020b; Walsh & Gokani, 2014). It is these movements which may determine how - if at all - critical political psychology is able to contribute to advancing socially just causes. Although critical political psychology work of this kind has certainly increased in recent years, especially over the last decade, it remains peripheral. In what follows, I look at how political psychology can generate critical insights by engaging with the emancipatory potentialities of love within contexts of political resistance and solidarity-making.

5. Love and critical political psychology: new directions

In this section, I consider what political psychology can offer to the study of love, as well as how engaging love can imbue political psychology with a mode criticality that endorses a particular set of progressive political principles. To these ends, I offer two pathways through which to harness love as a psychopolitical concept within political psychology. First, in working with people to build counter-hegemonies rooted in the love ethic, I argue that we can foster within political psychology a commitment to, and critical engagement with, the goals of different grassroots resistance movements. Second, I posit that enunciating love knowledges across contexts can allow for spaces within which activists can organise their struggles along affective lines, and institute collective modalities of psychosocial healing.

5.1. Rooting counter-hegemonies in the love ethic

Ideological hegemony is never foreclosed (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Dominant ideologies are marked by gaps and contradictions which can be exploited to create counter-hegemonic formations through, for instance, subversive cultural practices, community media campaigns, and consciousness-raising initiatives. If, however, counter-hegemonies are to garner influence, they must critique dominant ideological arrangements of power in ways that speak to people's material needs as well as their psychological desires (see Malherbe, 2020a). Within psychology, it is usually those who are involved with community psychology, feminist psychology and liberation psychology that have sought to work with collectives to advance counter-hegemonic insurgency (Moane, 2006). In moving political psychology in a more critical direction, Montero (1997, 2015) urges political psychologists to align their disciplinary practice with the goals of different community-based counter-hegemonic initiatives. Below, I propose how we might do so using the love ethic.

Centring the love ethic within collective counter-hegemonic practice does not represent a fixation with love as such, but rather with creating the kinds of solidarities that are required to affect political changes which prioritise the needs of others and the self within the context of others. We need not love our comrades when enacting such change, but they must be held accountable if we are to work with them in creating counter-hegemonies which are conducive to the love ethic. Yet, because love's reciprocity is never guaranteed, a counter-hegemonic resistance politics premised on the love ethic strives to create a more just world without the promise of this world being realised. In this sense, the love ethic infuses counter-hegemonic action with a deeply humanistic kind of hope. For political psychologists working with people to ground their counter-hegemonic practices in the love ethic, preoccupations with individualism and behaviourism must be abandoned for a concern with the psyche as it exists and is remade in contexts of collective action and democratic struggle.

We might, at this point, ask how we can strengthen counter-hegemonic efforts premised on the love ethic. To my mind, the creation of a chain of equivalence represents an especially useful entry point here (see Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In short, a chain of equivalence begins to form when different counter-hegemonic resistance movements articulate their respective political demands to one another in an effort to create coalitions. As linkages between different struggles do not necessarily exist *a priori*, a chain of equivalence pivots on this process of articulation, meaning that in forming a chain of equivalence, we alter how we express our political demands. Yet, articulating political demands across movements in this way is tremendously challenging (see Malherbe, 2020b), especially when the movements in question are hostile or dismissive towards one another. Thus, in addition to securing the resources required to establish a chain of equivalence (e.g. a central location and/or the necessary communications), political psychologists concerned with the love ethic should attempt to work with and across movements to articulate their political struggles through the affective elements of such struggle. This is to say, activists should be provided with spaces in which to express feelings of frustration, anger, resentment and disappointment, all of which accompany the love ethic. Rather than psychologising the politics of different social movements, however, the purpose of these affective spaces is to harness the emotionality of struggles towards identifying points of connection across movements (i.e. fostering good love). For example, although the respective political demands of some feminist and labour movements may, at first, appear incongruent (see Hardt & Negri, 2017), when those involved in these movements draw on their emotional resources to communicate to one another how different exploitative working conditions make them feel, they may begin to establish affective links (between, for instance, productive and reproductive labour). Linkages of this kind are crucial to infusing political struggles with the relational and material concerns of good love. Here, the love ethic does not function to build idealist coalitions that paper over differences and antagonisms, but instead uses the affect generated by these antagonisms to identify points of solidarity, thus strengthening an expansive counter-hegemonic resistance politics (see Malherbe, 2020b). It is in this sense that activists can politicise the Freudian conception of love by realising the love ethic through antagonism (see Freud, 1930, 2007).

Enacting a chain of equivalence through the love ethic requires that political psychologists work with people to resist love's tyrannical potentialities. Many identity-based movements face hostility and violence not only in society, but also from those claiming to be on the political left (see Wilkinson, 2017). This was observed in activists' experiences of (hetero)sexism, homophobia and transphobia during 2015's student-led Fallist movement in South Africa (Ndelu, Dlakavu, & Boswell, 2017), as well as the sexual violence that several female protesters experienced from male protesters during Egypt's January 25 Revolution in 2011 (Sorbera, 2014). It is therefore not antithetical to the love ethic to facilitate spaces wherein particular identity groups may organise among themselves. Spaces of this sort should not be understood as perpetuating bad love or as functioning as an end in and of themselves. They are geared towards facilitating people's collective capacity to take on the risk of love, that is, to abandon commitments to our current conjuncture in order to create a more just world (Hardt, 2011). If permitted into these spaces of identity-based political organising, political psychologists may work with people to ensure that modes of social, material and environmental dependency (all of which are required to build counter-hegemonies) are purposed for love and not exploitation (Butler, 2020).

Rooting counter-hegemonic activity in the love ethic requires that political psychologists concerned with group-level processes take seriously the fiercely contested terrain upon which emancipatory resistance politics are democratically built. This is to say, critical political psychology of this sort demands that psychologists stand alongside people in the slow, tedious and demanding procedures inherent to counter-hegemonic coalition-building. In this respect, the love ethic can

function as a conduit through which to connect one's own liberation to that of others; effectively making love part of our cultural composition (see Malherbe, 2020a). Further, by engaging the democratic and affective forces involved in creating, reproducing and transforming social relations from below (see Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), political psychology begins to move away from State-centric perceptions of politics. It is, however, ultimately up to those involved in social movements and political organising to decide how (and if) critical political psychology can be of use to their struggles.

5.2. Enunciating love knowledges

Tileagă (2013) asserts that to move away from the top-down, pragmatist and universalising approaches favoured by many mainstream variants of political psychology, critical political psychologists should look to the contingent, cultural and contextual elements that define our everyday realities (see also Moane, 2006). However, willing political psychology in the direction of people's everyday lives and desires can be challenging, and while several critical political psychologists have undertaken important work in this area, few have taken seriously questions of love. In speaking to this, I argue that shifting love knowledges from one context to another - that is to say, enunciating love knowledges as they exist in the interpersonal and political spheres - can provide important insights into people's desires and everyday experiences, and how these intersect with activist demands. Specifically, I consider how enunciating love knowledges can alter our political hermeneutics, allow for collective healing, and make connections between people's intimate lives and their political selves.

The constitution of love in our everyday lives represents a materially-grounded knowledge form that is ordinary and, potentially, revolutionary (see Berlant, 2011; Sandoval, 2000). Love knowledges represent how we know and feel (but rarely speak, or enunciate) the love ethic. As noted earlier, enunciating love knowledge requires that we linguistically signify loving action (much of which we perform instinctually, or without reflection) so that we (ourselves and others) can learn from this action (Fournet, 2011). Although these knowledges are oftentimes unequally constituted (e.g. within heteropatriarchal familial arrangements), it is when they are harnessed to envision care, responsibility, recognition, communication and political commitment beyond the confines of capitalism that they are able to assume emancipatory potential (see hooks, 2000; Malherbe, 2020b). It follows, then, that love knowledges can serve as useful conduits for bridging the personal with the political. However, like love itself, love knowledges are never complete (McGowan, 2016), meaning that enunciating and using love knowledges to link the personal with the political always occurs in an ambiguous space of incompleteness. Below I demonstrate how critical political psychologists can work with activists to enunciate love knowledges.

If love knowledges are to enrich resistance politics, they have to be enunciated as well as bi-directionally (re)formulated across contexts. To this end, the political psychologist should facilitate spaces in which activists and other community members work together to enliven their political vocabularies through the affective hermeneutics which may be afforded by enunciating a diversity of love knowledges. Through enunciation, different - even oppositional - love knowledges that exist within our political activity and personal lives can be built upon and learned from in an effort to reconsider how we understand love's political possibilities. In so doing, we are able to make connections between the personal, the political, the private and the public. Yet, as Freud (1930) reminds us, love tends to associate itself with destructive forces (Butler, 2020), which makes enunciating love knowledges a fraught and an uneven affair. It is, however, the very incongruity of love knowledges that imbues the enunciation process with the potential to create generative ruptures in how we interpret and make connections between people's politics and their day-to-day lives. How, for example, does political organising change when we conceive of solidarity as care

work? What would democratic childrearing look like? Might the rage that one experiences during protest action point towards not a self-contained feeling, but an affective expression of one's responsibility for the well-being of the collective? Shifting our political hermeneutic in these ways also presents an opportunity for affective consciousness-raising (see Freire, 1972), whereby individuals are made to interrogate their - perhaps unconscious - adherence to oppressive and/or exclusionary practices of love in their political and personal lives. That is, people can work together in the context of struggle to (re)align their understanding of love with liberatory, egalitarian and humanistic principles. Therefore, although enunciating love knowledges does not hold emancipatory potential in and of itself, enunciation can allow us to take on the challenging task of rethinking the personal through the political and *vice versa*. Attempting to enunciate our loving action, and thus giving it a concretised epistemic form, can allow people to use, study and reform different ways of loving (many of which operate habitually). In this sense, enunciating love knowledges allows us to collectively engage the love orientation as an artform that is to be developed across contexts and not taken for granted (Fromm, 1962).

In addition to animating our political vocabularies, the enunciation of love knowledges can serve to carve out space for engaging with different practices of collective healing within resistance movements (see West & Ritz, 2009). As Ureña (2017) argues, by embracing the ambiguity and unknowability of the Other, love serves as a theoretical and practical model for healing (see also hooks, 2000). However, she cautions that love (and its knowledges) cannot offer a definitive fix (i.e. love does not *heal*). Instead, love knowledges can foster within our politics a continued process of *healing* that is based on connectedness, empathetic attachment and political association (see Hardt & Negri, 2004; 2017). Working with activists to enunciate love knowledges across contexts can ensure that resistance movements are willed towards not only the pragmatism of their political demands, but also modalities of collective healing which speak to the psychic torment of lovelessness experienced by so many under racial and patriarchal capitalism (hooks, 2000). Collective healing may then, over time, formalise itself as a legitimate political demand - as well as a developing knowledge form - within resistance movements.

In working with people to enunciate love knowledges, a critical political psychology concerned with both communication and group-level processes advances a definition of politics that includes individual meaning-making, consciousness-raising and collective healing. A politics of this sort can enable political psychologists to bridge the personal with the political by seeking out the answers to pertinent socio-political questions within grassroots struggle, rather than through moralistic and/or top-down speculation (see Fox & Prilleltensky, 1996; Moane, 2006).

6. Conclusion

The full range of love's psychopolitical consequences and emancipatory potentialities remain largely under-theorised in psychological research. In this article, I have by no means provided an exhaustive account of how love can be conceptualised within psychology, or indeed how we might stand in love in our psychological and political engagements. Rather, in an effort to bridge the personal with the political, make connections between artificially segregated realms of struggle, resist love's tyrannies, and institute transformative spaces marked by collective psychosocial healing, I have sought to demonstrate how political psychologists can work with activists to engage both the love ethic and love knowledges. In turn, we can begin to develop a critical and politically-committed political psychology that is able to offer insights into the utility, social function and political value of love.

Future work of this kind should consider how quantitative political psychology can enrich psychopolitical theorising of love. Additionally, it may be useful to flesh out the pedagogical implications, opportunities and limitations of studying love within political psychology. The clinical

and/or methodological applications of this sort of work may also present fruitful avenues of scholarly inquiry. Although grassroots political resistance efforts served as the primary focus of this article, future studies should examine the emancipatory and regressive consequences of love in formalised party politics. Lastly, future work may consider how governmental bodies can work with people to advance the love ethic (e.g. through the provision of healthcare services), as well as how academic institutions can harness love knowledges (e.g. placing indigenous love knowledge systems within higher education curricula). In both instances, however, it is important to guard against neoliberal co-option which demands that love adheres to the profit motive. Therefore, when dealing with such top-down structures, the manner by which grassroots movements hold institutions accountable is crucial.

Both the love ethic and love knowledges can alter our loving dispositions and transform our worldviews, behaviours, relationships, and political actions. It is hoped that the provocations offered in this article encourage others to examine the different ways by which harnessing love as an art form, an ethic, an episteme and, fundamentally, a disposition, can bring critical political psychology into the project of creating “a world in which it is easier to love” (Freire, 1972, p. 24).

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