**Intellectual Production #10**

**Slide 1 – Title Slide**

**Slide 2**

New materialism is an interdisciplinary, theoretical, and politically committed field of inquiry, emerging roughly at the millennium as part of what may be termed the post-constructionist, ontological, or material turn. Spearheaded by thinkers such as Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, Vicki Kirby, and Manuel DeLanda, new materialism has emerged mainly from the front lines of feminism, philosophy, science studies, and cultural theory, yet it cuts across and is cross-fertilized by both the human and natural sciences (Yi Senchindiver, 2017). New materialism is an attempt *to do what the post-moderns claim, but fail to do: to deconstruct the language/reality dichotomy*. It is a *new settlement*, rather than a revival of the *old* historical, Marxist-inspired materialism (Monforte, 2018, p. 379). Toohey defines new materialism scholarship as engaged research by scholars who recognize the entanglement and material nature of humans, discourses, machines, other objects, other species, and the natural environment. The growing scholarship that recognizes these linkages refers to a perspective of new materialism, post humanism, feminist materialism, process philosophy, or relational ontologies (Toohey, 2018).

**Slide 3**

Agency is a core term used in new materialist theory. Different theorists have different ideas on how agency works in new materialist theory (Colman, 2018). Toohey argues that educational work builds human agency allowing humans to make choices, impose those choices on the world, negotiate interactions, and act to make change (Toohey, 2018). Barad argues that agency is not an attribute of something or someone, it is the enactment of iterative changes to a particular practice. Latour refers to a notion of distributed agency that sees human and non-human actors as equal, formulating the notion of generalized symmetry (Toohey, 2018). As Toohey indicates, new materialism involves the shifting of agency to intelligent matters of human thinking and dictates how people interact with each other.

**Slide 4**

Intra-action is a term used by Barad. Human bodies, discourses, environments, technologies, etc. are constantly evolving, learning, and adapting with one another. Barad refers to this as intra-action (Toohey, 2018). She argued that, if two things are in interaction, then they are separate entities with individual characteristics, but if they are in relation to one another, they intra-act and come into being through their entanglement (Toohey, 2018, p.29). Educational researchers interested in thinking about intra-action at a classroom level, might examine how physical locations, the objects available (furniture, books, human bodies, paper, computers, water, and so on), discourses on the nature of ‘knowledge’ and learning (materialised in books, curriculum documents, staff room conversations, and so on), and political, educational and economic policies are assembled and entangled, and how they ‘intra-act’ with one another; further, educational researchers would query how they are changing together and/or how they might or could change together (Toohey, 2018, p.30).

**Slide 5**

Pedagogy is a term that refers to the method of how educators teach in theory and practice. Page argues that a new materialist definition of pedagogy is the union of the mind, body and spirit, not just for striving for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world, and practice of how to live in the world. Using this idea, pedagogy can then be understood as an entanglement of the body with the world (social and material) that we learn with but that also teaches. Given this, pedagogy can then occur everywhere, not only in the classroom; and it can be also be personal/individual and/or public/collective (Page, 2020).

**Slide 5**

New materialism allows us to re-imagine best practices in educational pedagogies. As Hill outlines, reflective practice within the field of education has been a mainstay and has revolutionized teaching pedagogy by encouraging intentionality, criticality, and innovation and empowering educators to become agents of change (Hill, 2018). Barad suggests that diffraction is an alternate method of reflective practice. Barad defines diffraction as the process of being attentive to how differences are made and the effects of the differences. Diffraction can be used to acknowledge how we learn about ‘material configurations of the world’s becoming’ (Hill, 2018). Hill illustrates the comparison of reflective versus diffractive practice; reflective practice seeks to interpret, whereas diffractive practice reads, objects and bodies, through one another to illuminate how differences emerge (Hill, 2010).

**Slide 6 – References**

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**Optional Activity to Reinforce Concepts Described**

You can easily demonstrate new materialist theory using a physical demonstration, such as room configuration. Typically, when we think about how a workshop or class is delivered, we have certain expectations of how the room should be set up. As a workshop participant, we expect a room with tables or desks and chairs for learners, a whiteboard or smartboard at the front of the room or a piece of equipment that allows projection of an electronic presentation, and a place for the facilitator or instructor to teach the workshop from.

Before the workshop, change the set up in the room you are presenting in and allow participants to set up their own learning space. When they enter the room and have no place to sit, their expectations of a typical workshop configuration will be disrupted. Ask participants to set up a room configuration for the workshop, and as they set up their learning space, the human (learners) and non-human (tables, chairs, etc.) objects will assemble in intra-action. Explain how the configuration of people and objects in the workshop space were influenced by each other. Explain how their choices of where to sit and how to configure the space was intertwined with each other’s thoughts, opinions, and choices. To extend the idea of agency, emphasize how the configuration of people and objects in the workshop can influence the types of activities and engagements that take place in the workshop.