The Creative Pathways of Everyday Life: Towards a Sociomaterial Approach to Creativity in Education

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Abstract: Prevailing thinking in education today tends to approach creativity as a form of individual giftedness or talent endowed upon a limited few (Borland, 2005). It is understood as something that a person either has or not. This reified conception of creativity, in its commitment to the hierarchical distribution of creative capacity and its neglect of context and experience, therefore becomes an ideal tool for the maintenance and reproduction of elite interest (Harris, 2014). In this presentation, and in contrast to the individualistic view, I will outline a sociomaterial (Tanggaard, 2013) approach to creativity. From a sociomaterial perspective creativity is not understood as a property of individuals; rather it is understood as a characteristic of how human beings engage with (and in) social, symbolic, and material space. A sociomaterial conception of creativity invites us to think about creativity as a pathway, where creativity emerges not from within but from the relationship that exists between a person and their social, symbolic, and material space. By both universalizing and situating creative capacity, this approach has important implications for how we conceptualize and identify creativity (as well as the creative power of agents) in everyday life. I will close by briefly explaining how I developed this perspective into a craft-based ethnography (the data of which I am currently analyzing) with local Toronto high school students where I sought to better understand their creative engagements in everyday schooling.

Bio: Kevin Naimi is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Social Justice Education at OISE/University of Toronto. His broader research interests focus on the possibilities and conditions for transformative action in contemporary education and the types of power that young people perceive they have in everyday life. He completed his MA in Philosophy of Education at OISE.

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