

DIANA MASNY & DAVID R. COLE

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO MULTIPLE LITERACIES THEORY

A Deleuzian Perspective

INTRODUCTION

This book comes at a time when literacy has perhaps been overly researched and theorized around the world. Governments are especially interested in investigating and collecting data about how their citizens become literate. One might legitimately ask the question: Why do we need more research and theory about literacy? The short answer to this question is that we do not need more information about the processes of literacy. What we do need is work that combines data with a theoretical frame that makes sense of the diverse literacy practices and complex demographics of populations through which literacy is now apparent. In poststructural terms, it could be said that literacy research is an area of ‘over-coding’ (Webb, 2009). This means that the balance between signification and the content of the signification is out of phase. For example, the enormous attention that has been given to reading comprehension in educational research is incongruous with the role that reading comprehension plays in the educational process. Reading comprehension has been over-coded by outside bodies solely interested in the results of reading comprehension, i.e., literacy tests. This volume addresses this situation by going outside of the norm, and proposing a new way of conceptualizing literacy, Multiple Literacies Theory (Masny, 2006), combined with data to solidify this view.

WHAT ARE MULTIPLE LITERACIES?

Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT), *reading, reading the world and self* is a theoretical framework influenced by the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze, and the social theory of Gilles Deleuze with Félix Guattari to underpin the concept of literacy. The concept of literacy has been much debated, and is a synthetic term that has come to encompass reading, writing, speaking and listening practices. The idea of literacy has also expanded and become a serial collocated suffix in new terms such as media literacy, information literacy, critical literacy, affective literacy, medical literacy, statistical literacy, technological literacy. This is not the way in which literacy should be understood in this volume, as Multiple Literacies Theory posits multiplicity in the conception of literacy from the start, and foregrounds Gilles Deleuze as the thinker of multiplicities *par excellence*. Multiple literacies as

understood in this book are therefore in part a philosophical position that designates multiplicity as an operating principle for the practices included in literate communication. Another part of the multiple literacies in this volume is actual happenings in the world, where real groups and individuals ‘do’ literacy. This volume therefore needs empirical evidence to uphold the multiplicity that has been designated from the start as a philosophical proposition. Furthermore, this book requires sensitive analysis of the evidence that does not over-write ‘real life’ with ideology or assumptions, but teases the designation of multiple literacies from the evidence with the “ease of an artist and the precision of a scientist” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 29). This collection of chapters ultimately builds a theoretical framework for literacy as multiple, and collects evidence for this claim through empirical research.

WHY DELEUZE?

As has been mentioned above, the work of Gilles Deleuze has been chosen to underpin Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) due to his rethinking about multiplicity. The critical aspect of his thinking through of multiplicity comes when he expands the notion of quantitative multiplicities to include qualitative multiplicities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 30). These qualitative multiplicities have the effect of establishing differences in nature. Henri Bergson undoubtedly heavily influenced Deleuze in this conception, as Bergson was concerned with thinking through the relationship between ecological and evolutionary systems and the ways in which these systems may be represented and conceived in notions of creativity such as the “*élan vital*” or “*durée*” (Deleuze, 1988). Deleuzian multiplicities are therefore simultaneously numerical and qualitative. They attest to the fact that the harder that one analyses a concept, idea or notion – the further one is able to differentiate between different aspects of that ‘unity’. Dualism dissolves in transversality. Dichotomies become assemblages – dialogue is thought of as a symphony of voices, most of which are not usually heard or are suppressed due to power concerns. Deleuzian multiplicities also more closely conform to the processes of change to be found in any system:

Living organisms are autopoietic systems: self-constructing, self-maintaining, energy-transducing autocatalytic entities. They are also systems capable of evolving by variation and natural selection: they are self-reproducing entities, whose forms and functions are adapted to their environment and reflect the composition and history of an ecosystem (Harold, 2001, p. 232).

The problem in education is that systems are often designated as being closed or finite. For example, primary literacy development can take on a linear aspect in curriculum and syllabus documents that list different stages in reading, writing, spelling and oral language (Annadale, Bindon, Handley, Johnston, Lockett & Lynch, 2004). Yet educators know that linear development in literacy skills is a myth, and that students develop at different rates, depending upon certain internal and environmental triggers. Students may find the activities of the classroom exceedingly dull and not develop their literacy skills, even though they are fully capable of engagement. The same students may at another time find the classroom

environment and activities extremely interesting and suddenly take off in their desire to read, write and communicate. Multiple Literacies Theory recognises this disparity, and designates multiplicity at the heart of literate communication. Developmental charts may be comforting and provide solace for the spectator who needs a clear progressive story in terms of understanding the way literacy works. Yet these myths are far from the truth. Using Deleuzian multiplicities to underpin literacy theory points to the ways in which communication abilities form feedback loops and aggregate in internal and external ways. These changes in nature are qualitative and chaotic, time based and spatially inferential. This book looks to chart these changes and provide guidance for educators who wish to understand multiple changes in literacy, and the factors involved with these changes that will influence their planning, classroom management and assessment principles.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DELEUZE, AND DELEUZE & GUATTARI

Gilles Deleuze wrote about the history of philosophy, cinema, and theoretical treatises called *Difference & Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. These works are markedly different from his combined writings with Félix Guattari. Working with Guattari opened Deleuze up to new ways of thinking and a spontaneous and joyful approach to theorization. Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) keeps the best of both ‘Deleuzes’ to enable a fuller understanding of the multiple in literacy study. For example, qualitative multiplicities are certainly a powerful and important philosophical concept, designed to provide clues for thinking about changes in nature in education and the ways in which communication is a non-linear process. Yet there are also social consequences in designating multiplicity at the heart of literate activity. In their first combined work, *Anti Oedipus*, Freud and Marx were blended by Deleuze and Guattari (1984) to create a critique of the ways in which bourgeois European society has projected images of itself and attempted to reconcile these images through synthesis and economic activity. In the series of essays entitled, *A Thousand Plateaus*, this blending is taken to another level and increased numbers of scientific and artistic positions are incorporated into the analysis to understand the developing relationship between capitalism and schizophrenia. All this could take us a very long way from understanding how students become literate. Yet the processes and reversals, flips and knots, jokes and false pathways do resonate with the ways in which literacy has itself gone beyond simple definition. Today children may be sat in front of televisions at home and imbibe the contents of cable television and this will certainly affect their communication skills and resultant literacies. Conversely, teachers and students may be determined in their educational practice by the use of literacy benchmarks that are standardized tests designed to provide literacy information for external bodies. The concept of literacy is therefore a highly convoluted construction, especially when one considers its societal consequences. The proposition of this volume, and Multiple Literacies Theory, is that the use of Deleuze’s central philosophical ideas, combined with the social theory of Deleuze and Guattari, takes us closer to understanding how literacy is presently constructed.

MULTIPLE LITERACIES THEORY (MLT) AND MULTILITERACIES

One might perceive a distinct similarity between Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) and multiliteracies as has been theorized by the New London Group (1996). Multiliteracies was conceived by the group to incorporate the ways in which literacy is changing in contemporary society with the need for social justice in pluralistic, multicultural contexts. This convergence of changing literacy landscapes and unstable demographics neatly sums up the educational environment in countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, as well as other industrialized countries where the teaching of English is as a second language. At the heart of the multiliteracies framework is a concern for design, and a specific focus on designing social futures that are equitable and inclusive. This central conception of design in multiliteracies may be built upon and makes up the multimodality of textual use – that includes gestural, spatial, audio, visual and linguistic meaning. Such multimodality is especially pertinent when one considers the construction of electronic text, in, for example, the Internet. Yet one should not mistake this mode of operation with the social/cultural consequences of multimodality, that have been drawn out in recent times by work on the ‘new literacies’ (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). The new literacies movement has been busy since the designation of Multiliteracies as a manner of explaining the contemporary explosion in literacies that has been primarily mediated through the application of digital technology to communication processes. The new literacies ‘map’ emerging literacies that are connected in complicated and entangled ways through the social lives of the students and in the relationships between official school communication, and out of school, tacit and group codes that are often not recognized in the official curriculum, for example, SMS messaging and social web sites such as *Facebook*. This is where multiliteracies and new literacies substantially differ from Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT). In summary these differences may be explained as:

Multiliteracies is philosophically based in phenomenology (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), whereas MLT is based in transcendental materialism (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Whilst this philosophical difference between the two approaches may seem to be trivial when one is teaching or learning literacy, it has profound effects for both systems. The multiliteracies framework argues that the social agenda for literacy should be in experience. MLT would counter that the social agenda of literacy is in the many aspects of life that flow through the subject and that constitute memories, desire and the mind. As such, experience is extremely difficult to render as a stable category when examining exactly what aspects of life determine literacy learning according to MLT. The philosophy of multiliteracies maintains the stable category of experience, especially when contrasting its construction of literacy with respect to previous iterations of literacy that relied heavily on print literacy practices. Multiliteracies says that the study of the media, which should be included in the design of new literacy curricula, dominates new literacy learning experiences. MLT accepts media influence as an important aspect of current literacy studies, yet would not posit this influence as an over riding or meta-narrative that might disrupt the primacy of qualitative multiplicities.

Technology is of fundamental importance in multiliteracies, and this theoretical frame has led to the present diversity of technological and digital literacies that are

being charted through the new literacies. In the MLT frame, technological mediation is of equal importance with every other contemporary literacy practice. The use of multiliteracies encourages literacy teachers to engage with technology in every aspect of the literacy-learning program, as it prepares students for the technological and global workplace (Cope & Kalantzis, 1995). MLT examines and incorporates technology wherever necessary, but does not make technological affordances dominant or a singular concern that might prelude more primitive ways of working in literacy, to be found, for example in the distribution of affect.

Power is distributed differently in MLT and in contrast to the multiliteracies model of literate behavior. In MLT the emphasis on power flows very much from local interactions that cause changes and transformations in micro-systems that direct power from the bottom-up and into macro-systems through various processes such as the rhizome or the machinic phylum. In multiliteracies, the focus on intelligent design is spread as a system property that guides all participants to work towards the globalization of literate behaviors and ultimately feeds into the power of corporate or governmental organization (if perhaps unknowingly). This is because design is a way of rationalizing behavior, and valuing literate performance as work: i.e. producing marking criteria that evaluate the design base of literacy. MLT as a means to assessing literate progress includes non-organized modes of becoming literate that are not open to the same power concerns as rational design, for example, the notion of desire and collective enunciation.

Multiliteracies encourage communities of learners through design, whereas MLT promotes action in learning. This action may come together in terms of a specified community, such as the French speaking educational communities of Canada, yet the actions and connections between actions that MLT produces are disparate and complex, and are not defined by any preconceived agenda. The meaning that one may take from MLT action learning is invariably communal (Goodchild, 1996); however, these meanings are not fixed in a standard western democratic or civil direction, as is the case with multiliteracies. MLT has the potential to be taken up by a plethora of communities as it deals with the issues of multiplicity that are at the core of their literate progress. A good example to illustrate this point is the situation of Aboriginal communities in Australia, and the struggle to keep their cultures alive.

Creativity takes on a fundamentally different orientation and focus in MLT and multiliteracies. MLT relies on the random collisions of affects (Parisi, 2004) that one might find in the teaching and learning context, whereas multiliteracies prioritize organized and structured projects that are the outcome of designing social futures. The application of multiliteracies in educational contexts may lead to interdisciplinary curriculum methods that encourage students to think holistically and to link knowledge areas through, for example, ICT software. MLT works through local knowledge to produce moments of inspiration, experimentation, critique and art (Deleuze, 1995).

Otherness, strangeness and alienation are included as parts of the MLT system, as they may be explored through personal literacy (Fiumara, 2001) and affect. Furthermore, difference in literacy practice is established in kind through MLT via

the use of qualitative multiplicities that make apparent the workings of the creative unconscious as a powerful driving force in becoming literate. Multiliteracies will tend to shut out such considerations through communities of practice working towards pre-defined social goals and coordinated design – even though the placement of critical literacy in the multiliteracies frame does signal a critical evaluation of which voices are being prioritized through literacy.

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

This book brings together the work of researchers from Australia, Canada and the United States who link their studies in education to Deleuze and to Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT). MLT may be understood through Masny's (2006) headline literacy dictum as: *Reading, Reading the World and Reading the Self* and is positioned here as a new way to conceptualize literacy based on the work of Gilles Deleuze. Multiple Literacies Theory is a framework and lens for understanding empirical evidence that consists of words, gestures, attitudes, speaking, writing, and valuing; and ultimately examines the processes and manners in which these literate behaviors come together through becoming with the world. Literacies may also be thought of as texts that express multiple meanings and are taken up as visual, oral, written, and tactile located in local contexts. Literacies as multiple constitute texts in a broad sense – i.e. music, art, physics, and mathematics. Multiple literacies fuse with socio-political, cultural, economic, political, gendered and racialized groups through practices that may be studied in schools or in the community. This is the process through which literacies are coded, and in the context of literacy research, has been over-coded as governments have poured funding into understanding the ways in which children become literate. The contexts for literacy research are however not static. The dynamics of local literate behaviors are fluid and transform literacies themselves and produce speakers, writers, artists, and new communities of practice that innovate on any established ways of becoming literate. In short, one might say that literacies – e.g. personal, critical, community, and school-based are about reading, reading the world, and reading the self as texts. This volume has been organized into chapters that illustrate these processes and ways of becoming literate in the world:

In chapter two, Diana Masny is interested in exploring children's' understanding of writing systems when they are acquiring more than one system simultaneously. The case study of writing acquisition that is included in this chapter is the context to examine the central theme of MLT that is becoming. Questions that this chapter confronts include: How do reading, reading the world and reading the self transform becoming in the processes of learning writing systems? As primogenitor of MLT, Masny shows how to join theory with practice. The case study of this chapter provides a platform to understand MLT, and the ways in which it may be used by researchers to extract the intricate influences that shape and form literacy. The girl in the study is simultaneously involved with three languages, and Masny looks at how she is negotiating the differences in these languages as well as her own emotions and processes of socialization and schooling.

Chapter three is by Megan Watkins, and is called, *Deleuze, Habit and the Literate Body*. In this chapter, the view of literacy as a cognitive ability is placed under erasure. This is because motor capacities such as posture, bodily composure and sustained concentration are tied to the notion of bodily literacy through the use of notions taken from continental philosophy such as the *habitus*. Literacy pedagogy tends to neglect the necessary training of the body in perfecting these skills by over emphasizing linguistic priorities. Watkins explores the enabling potential of habit in learning to write through several case studies. Becoming literate in these studies is predicated on habituation, in Deleuzian terms, which is the embodiment of skills whereby they no longer receive conscious attention but simply provide the means by which we are enabled to write. Watkins broadens the notion of Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) to incorporate bodily literacy into the ways in which a literate body must habituate a range of skills to not only ensure the efficient production of text but its creative manipulation. While much of learning to write implicates the body, the corporeality of the process is generally given little attention in literacy research.

Linda Knight constructed the next chapter, *Desire and Rhizome: Affective Literacies in Early Childhood*, and through this writing she positions young children as desiring machines. This conception is a deliberate move to make explicit certain relationships in educational thought such as passionate engagement and how thinking is processed and communicated. The discussion in this chapter uses rhizomatic connectivity and referencing in relation to MLT, and focuses on the inherent relationships in early childhood drawing. Drawings undertaken by young children act as empirical evidence and assist in exploring and detailing concepts of the desiring-machine and the rhizome. Knight is interested in exploring how such concepts have important implications for early childhood teaching and learning; particularly in subverting dominant early childhood education discourses of desire and communication. This chapter also has the effect of producing affective literacies for use in early childhood education. These affective literacies help us to understand how young children process information and learn to draw in a creative and spontaneous manner.

David R. Cole wrote chapter five, *Deleuzian Affective Literacy for Teaching Literature: A Literary Perspective in MLT*. He changes the focus from the previous three chapters and the early childhood data to the teaching of literature. This piece of writing positions Deleuzian affective literacy as a practice for teachers of literature that uses affect positively to enhance textual practice. Deleuze came back to the notion of affect throughout his career, and as such it is a powerful philosophical thread that one might extract from his oeuvre. Affect also acts as an important part of MLT as multiple literacies theory must include a connection to a means of education, whereby pragmatic goals may be realized. Cole's chapter shows how Deleuzian affect may be put to work in the classroom as an organizing principle for teaching literature, and as a means to establishing emotional pedagogy without recourse to personalization or subjectification. This outcome is due in part to the choice of text to be used by teachers employing Deleuzian affective literacy in their work and the ways in which text will be manipulated according to

Deleuzian notions that one may draw out from affect such as literate becoming and literate desire. This chapter includes examples of texts that may be profitably used by teachers of literature wishing to employ Deleuze in their teaching, and the ways in which these texts can be taught in unison with Deleuzian affective literacy.

Anna Hickey-Moody and Robert Haworth co-authored chapter six, *Affective Literacies* that focuses on emergent, radical literacies through the theoretical lens of Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari's theories of affect and the smith. The authors relate this perspective to MLT and the role community literacy can play in resisting state power and intervention. The writers are interested in sites of learning that demonstrate activism against dominant or assumed knowledges. Hickey-Moody and Haworth argue that there are holes in totalizing state systems from which affective economies emerge that are brokered by smiths. Such affective, kinesthetic systems are pedagogical in that they teach emergent, radical literacies. While affect may refer to different philosophical and psychological notions, the authors apply the concept of *affectus* in exploring three vignettes, or situated case studies of relational knowledge production, which are embedded within American and Australian youth counter-cultures. Through the concept of affect, these three sites are each readable as modes of shaping participants' literacy practices and ways of becoming subjects while at the same time facilitating the creation of new literacy practices and economies of cultural production. The implications are that cultural and political literacies can be broadly understood as being taught and learnt through affective economies.

In the following chapter, Inna Semetsky focuses on *Traversing Towards Ecoliteracy* in relation to Deleuze's philosophy, educational theory and MLT. She argues for ecoliteracy as a way to reconceptualise education embedded in lived experience which is qualified by three lines of flight: critical, clinical and creative – and that together form *becoming-ethical*. Ecoliteracy in education can only be achieved by traversing towards the three C's according to Semetsky. The drawing out of Deleuze's informal pedagogical model is helpful in bringing the oft-cited yet missing element of values in education that should be understood in terms of becoming-other and becoming-ethical. Semetsky uses her in depth knowledge of Deleuzian philosophy to skillfully blend together elements of his thought to the benefit of an enhanced educational practice. This enhanced practice, in a similar way to the previous two chapters, points to an educational future that might use the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze to connect local concerns with global pronouncements to be found in policy and curriculum statements. The point of doing this work here is to set up the grounds through which educationalists may include affective and ecoliteracies within an MLT frame.

Therese Dufresne extends this argument and examines the concept of *Readings of Self* within MLT in chapter eight. Through her work with two children, Mathieu and Andrew, this chapter offers a conceptual framework for the *Readings of self*. The writing in this chapter addresses how children in multilingual contexts conceptualize language, and how such conceptualizations and perceptions contribute to learning and MLT. Dufresne explores linear and non-linear forms of teaching and learning and demonstrates that learners can be in a situation to succeed if we are willing to recognize the unpredictable nature of teaching and learning and the

openness of school systems to advocate for non-linearity. The author also uses innovative writing strategies to illustrate these points and draws on her experience as an educator as well as an educational researcher. This chapter gives force to the argument that the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze may be employed to transform education. Dufresne shows how many misunderstandings in education may be resolved through attention to the behaviors and explanations of these behaviors using MLT. The examples in this chapter make sense of this procedure and add to the weight behind the call to incorporate MLT into mainstream educational practice and policy.

David R Cole put together chapter nine that is entitled, *Indexing the Multiple: An Autobiographic Account of Education Through the Lens of Deleuze and Guattari*. This chapter picks up in many ways on points made in the previous section as it provides a close reading of the self. The self under scrutiny is the writer of the chapter who was teaching in secondary inner city contexts in the UK. This experience is the powerful underpinning for the theorization of the chapter that uses the work of Deleuze and Guattari, and in particular, their thesis entitled *Anti Oedipus*. The author takes up theoretical aspects of *Anti Oedipus* to understand the processes and practices that were apparent in the contexts of a UK school. In particular, the relationships between teachers and students, the organization of the lessons, the atmosphere of the school, the ways in which authority is distributed and understood are all analyzed in this chapter. The author also uses evidence taken from literary works to enhance the reading of the self, and he makes an index of the sections in the chapter to add to the MLT frame. This chapter is a synthesis of educational experience, poststructural theory and MLT in an organizing index.

Chapter ten, *Reading Peace as Text: Multiple Literacies Theory as a Lens on Learning in LINC* takes us away from mainstream educational practice and brings us into the world of adults attending language instruction classes for newcomers to Canada (LINC). Monica Waterhouse is interested in how investment in multiple literacies produces transformations in the context of the LINC program. She explores how adult immigrants take up reading, reading the world and self. Waterhouse is also interested in what investment in multiple literacies produces: this investment is resolved through reading peace, reading world, reading self – and the processes of becoming through difference. In this chapter, peace is deterritorialized as Waterhouse undertakes an intensive and immanent reading in her study of reading peace as text in the process of immigrant adults acquiring English language literacies. This chapter includes a case study, which is broken up into vignettes that illustrate the concepts and processes that are being theorized. The vignettes are recorded conversations between the researcher and the participants in the language classes that demonstrate the political significance of applying MLT to reading peace as a text. The concept of peace has already been broken down by the participants in the study, and is unpacked by them as they speak to the researcher.

In chapter eleven, *Experimenting with Multiple Literacies Theory: Exploration of a New Lens for Policy Analysis*, Marzieh Tafaghodtari explores a class of English as a second language (ESL) adult-learners at university. The author begins

her chapter with a brief history of competing notions of literacy and the current emphasis on functional literacy that prevails in ESL courses. The study that is detailed in this chapter brings the researcher to this class to examine how program policies support or interact with literacy orientations; i.e., the value that is placed on literacy and multiple forms of literacy and how the subject position is produced in the policy texts. In her study, Tafaghodtari illustrates how a functional orientation towards literacy might fall short of understanding learners' critical engagement in sense making processes. MLT opens up avenues for uncovering creative processes that are involved in sense making and literacy experiences. The author of this chapter also provides clues as to how one might understand MLT as a type of semiotics that can be used to interrogate literate moments in the lives of ESL students. This process is in contrast to policy documents that designate descriptors and progress statements without reference to moments in the lives of the students. This chapter shows how MLT is a framework to enable real language events in the lives of students to explain their progress in language learning.

The next chapter of this volume is called, *MLT as a Minor Poststructuralism of Education*. David R. Cole uses Deleuze and Guattari's combined writing on Kafka to provide a platform for understanding MLT. This chapter explains the significance of defining MLT as a type of poststructuralism, and how this relates to education. Deleuze and Guattari explore how writing in the manner of Kafka, who constructed stories in terms of the worries and fears of his characters, opens up literary and social questions. These questions are answered from the perspective of a minor philosophy, and this has consequences for educational research, that is a vital aspect of MLT. This chapter shows how social questions of identity and representation are dealt with by positing MLT as a minor postructuralism of education. For example, the position of teachers and learners are explored through this lens, as well as Oedipal influence in education and the machinic qualities of post-industrial educational practice. This chapter puts MLT to work as a positive perspective that encourages radical change and acts as a challenge to stable formulations of education that act through concrete or uncritical axioms.

In the final chapter entitled, *What's in a Name* Diana Masny has explicated a number of concepts central to MLT. Some of these concepts include reading, reading the world, and reading the self. The necessity for including this chapter is to illustrate how the creation of these concepts works in MLT and is particular to MLT, ways of becoming with the world.

CONCLUSION

MLT is not a universal solution to literacy problems. Neither is it a theory that explains every situation in which one might become literate. Yet the application of Multiple Literacies Theory does act as a means to coming closer to dealing with the multiplicities of literacies that are present in any communicative arena. Using the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and the social theory of Deleuze and Guattari, gives the literacy analyst a new vocabulary and set of conceptual tools through which they might approach literate behavior.

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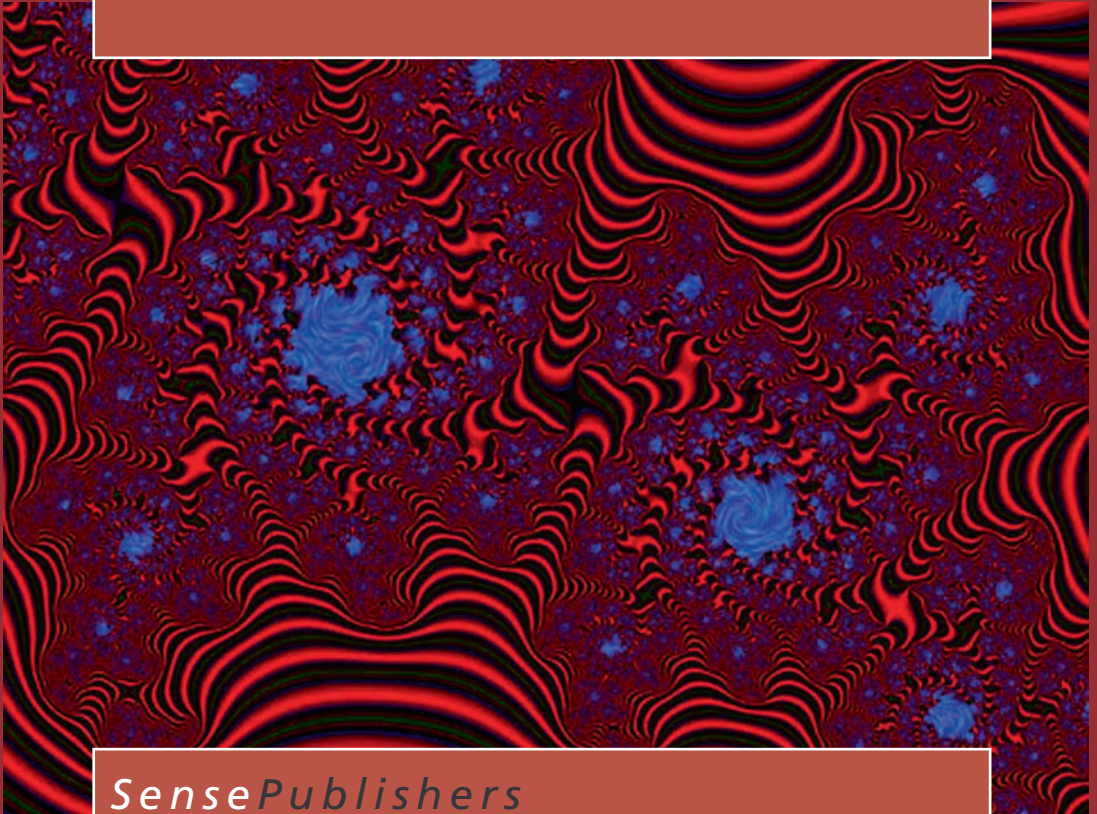
Diana Masny
University of Ottawa
Canada

David R. Cole
University of Technology, Sydney
Australia.

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University of Technology, Sydney



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CONTENTS

PREFACE TO MULTIPLE LITERACIES THEORY Ronald Bogue	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1: <i>Introduction To Multiple Literacies Theory: A Deleuzian Perspective</i> , Diana Masny & David R. Cole	1
CHAPTER 2: <i>Literacies as Becoming: A Child's Conceptualizations of Writing Systems</i> , Diana Masny	13
CHAPTER 3: <i>Deleuze, Habit and the Literate Body</i> , Megan Watkins	31
CHAPTER 4: <i>Desire and Rhizome: Affective Literacies in Early Childhood</i> , Linda Knight	51
CHAPTER 5: <i>Deleuzian Affective Literacy for Teaching Literature: A Literary Perspective on Multiple Literacies Theory</i> , David R. Cole	63
CHAPTER 6: <i>Affective Literacies</i> , Anna Hickey-Moody & Robert Haworth	79
CHAPTER 7: <i>Deleuze Pure and Applied Becoming Ethical: Traversing Towards Ecoliteracy</i> , Inna Semetsky	93
CHAPTER 8: <i>When Worlds Collide: Readings of Self Through a Lens of Difference</i> , Therese Dufresne	105
CHAPTER 9: <i>Indexing the Multiple: An Autobiographic Account of Education through the Lens of Deleuze & Guattari</i> , David R. Cole	119
CHAPTER 10: <i>Reading Peace as Text: Multiple Literacies Theory as a Lens on Learning in LINC</i> , Monica Waterhouse	133
CHAPTER 11: <i>Experimenting with Multiple-Literacies Theories: Exploration of a New Lens for Policy Analysis</i> , Marziez H. Tafaghodtari	151
CHAPTER 12: <i>MLT as a Minor Poststructuralism of Education</i> , David R. Cole	167
CHAPTER 13: <i>What's in a Name?: Multiple Literacies Theory</i> , Diana Masny	181
CONTRIBUTORS	193