

Chapter 2

The Marginal Syllabus: Educator Learning and Web Annotation Across Sociopolitical Texts and Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This case study examines educator learning as mediated by open web annotation among sociopolitical texts and contexts. The chapter introduces annotation practices and conceptualizes intertextuality to describe how open web annotation creates dialogic spaces which gather together people and texts, coordinates meaning-making, and encourages political agency. This perspective on texts-as-contexts is used to present and analyze educator participation in the Marginal Syllabus, a social design experiment that leverages open web annotation to foster conversation about educational equity. One conversation from the Marginal Syllabus is analyzed using mixed method approaches to data collection, analysis, and the presentation of findings. Learning analytics and discourse analysis detail how open web annotation mediated educator participation among sociopolitical texts and contexts of professional relevance. The chapter concludes by discussing open web annotation as a means of coordinating educator participation in public conversations about sociopolitical issues related to educational equity.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the relationship between everyday digital media practice and political agency. Specifically, we theorize such practice in reference to perspectives on intertextuality and we present a study of educators' learning as mediated by *open web annotation* (OWA) among sociopolitical texts and contexts. In an era when both classrooms and educational technologies are frequently a locus of surveillance and control – sites, it can be argued, where “dominant ideologies are produced” (Apple, 1995, p. 14) – we are especially concerned with participation structures that encourage political dimensions of talk (e.g., Slakmon & Schwarz, 2017), how educators engage in such discourse, and the ways in which educator involvement in *dialogic space* (Wegerif, 2007) becomes relevant to classroom teaching and learning. The efforts reported in this chapter are directed to both inquiry and change; we present a case study of a *social design experiment* (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010) predicated upon the need to create and maintain open learning contexts within which educators can exercise political agency through dialogue, question dominant schooling narratives, and critique inequitable educational practices. In this respect, our chapter is an attempt to work “toward understanding and acting on educational technology in terms of its complicated and often unjust connections to the larger society... to develop a more politically aware and sociologically grounded narrative of change” (Selwyn & Facer, 2013, p. 4). We develop one such narrative of change by examining OWA as both a context for and a mediator of educator agency that is grounded in social and political contexts of education, expansive designs for professional learning, and new expressions of media practice (Kalir & Dean, 2018).

As evidenced by historic, economic, and pedagogical analyses, the use of technologies for both formal and interest-driven learning can be perceived critically and as reflecting political interests, whether corporate or of the state (e.g., Cuban, 1986; Watters, 2016). A similar case may be made about educator professional development, which historically has been limited by atomistic and authoritative design (Webster-Wright, 2009), as well as disconnection from relevant learning activities and contexts (Hill, 2009). Amidst these conditions, digital technologies and everyday media practices have opened public, more participatory, and collaborative repertoires through which educators have begun to frequently engage in professionally-relevant learning (Gover, 2017; Jones & Dexter, 2014; Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2013). At times both promising and also problematic, efforts like Twitter chats (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015; Visser, Evering, & Barrett, 2014), EdCamps (Carpenter & Linton, 2016), and online affinity spaces (Nacu, Martin, Pinkard, &

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