Gab, Parler, and (Mis)educational Technologies: Reconsidering Informal Learning on Social Media Platforms

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"Alternative" social media platforms like Parler and Gab—on which hate speech and conspiracy theories often exist unchecked—present an opportunity for instructional designers and other education professionals to revisit assumptions about informal learning on social media. Employing a conceptual framework that distinguishes education from miseducation, we use these controversial platforms to argue that educators should more fully consider: 1) the miseducation happening in learning spaces, 2) how the design of educational technologies may amplify miseducation, and 3) the importance that formal education resist miseducation.

Introduction

The 2020 United States presidential election brought increased attention to "alternative" social media platforms[1] such as Parler and Gab. Two days after mainstream media networks called the election for Joe Biden, Brandom (2020) reported that the Parler mobile app had been downloaded nearly a million times since the election, with over half of those downloads occurring the day after the election was called. Although the Biden campaign felt Facebook was not doing enough to curb misinformation (Kang, 2020), many conservatives perceived platform efforts to label and remove misleading posts (part of enforcing existing policies) as censorship and anti-conservative bias. This led some to seek out other,

less-moderated platforms such as Parler and Gab (Aliapoulios et al., 2021; Isaac & Browning, 2020). After Trump's false claims of election fraud and the subsequent storming of the U.S. Capitol, Parler's association[2] with the event (see, e.g., Groeger et al., 2021; Bajak, et al., 2021) led to the removal of the platform's apps from the Google and Apple app stores and the platform itself from Amazon servers (Lyons, 2021).

These events offer an opportunity for education researchers and instructional designers to reflect on informal learning on social media platforms. These reflections will not be the first of their kind: A substantial proportion of early social media research was focused on education (van Osch & Coursaris, 2015), and recent literature reviews (e.g., Greenhow & Askari, 2017; Greenhow et al., 2020; Greenhow et al., 2019) attest to continued scholarship of social media's intersection with learning. Furthermore, most social media platforms have had long-standing problems with offensive speech and hateful communities, including hate groups on Facebook (Sonnemaker, 2020) or racist *subreddits* (Matney, 2015). Yet, the association of social media platforms like Gab, Parler, and even mainstream platforms with events like the storming of the Capitol, movements like American White nationalism, and conspiracy theories like QAnon provides a current opportunity for instructional designers and other educational technology professionals to revisit the ideas and assumptions that we as a discipline have brought to social media research.

In this position paper, we challenge the existing optimism surrounding informal learning on social media platforms (including our own) by considering *what* is learned on social media platforms like Gab and Parler through a conceptual framework of *miseducation*. In doing so, we underline that these specific platforms are not necessarily the focus of our paper—indeed, at the time of writing, both remain controversial-but-still-niche platforms whose future (and even survival) are uncertain. While we argue for the need to study informal learning in the darker corners of the social Web, we ultimately refer to these platforms merely as compelling examples of ideas and concepts that ought to guide researchers' and practitioners' consideration of *all* social media platforms and *all* educational technologies. We begin this paper with a brief review of existing research on informal learning and social media before describing the rise of "alternative" social media and outlining a conceptual framework of *miseducation*. With those pieces in place, we then outline considerations for considering these phenomena.

Footnotes

[1] We recognize that some use this term to refer to a broader phenomenon than social media platforms associated with the far right. However, it is being used this way in academic literature (e.g., Aliapoulios, et al., 2021; McIlroy-Young & Anderson, 2019; Rogers, 2020; Trujillo, et al., 2020), the popular press (e.g., Darroch, 2016; Isaac & Browning, 2020), and by the platforms themselves.

[2] Although Gab and Parler have rightly received scrutiny for their users' role in the storming of the Capitol, it is arguably more important to acknowledge that rioters also used mainstream social media platforms in conjunction with the event (e.g., Brewster, 2021).

Informal Learning and Social Media

This brief review will describe common conceptual frameworks for informal learning on social media, particular platforms that have been studied in this context, and the aspirational connections between informal and formal learning.

Understanding Informal Learning

It is common for research on educational uses of social media (including our own) to be informed by sociocultural perspectives on learning. For example, Greenhow and Robelia (2009) have suggested that the New Literacies tradition—which "focuses on ways in which meaning-making practices are evolving" (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014, p. 97)—is key to understanding learning through social media. Similarly, Hashim and Carpenter (2019) have noted that *community of practice* (see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and *affinity space* (see Gee, 2005, 2017) frameworks are commonly used in work on teachers' uses of social media. Inspired by fields such as anthropology and sociology—rather than the psychology that informs much learning research—the sociocultural tradition is especially open to learning not typically associated with formal settings (Greeno et al., 1996). For example, social media research has studied adolescents' becoming feminist (Gleason, 2018) and citizens' engaging with an activist movement (Gleason, 2013).

Differences Between Social Media Platforms

Education researchers have applied these sociocultural perspectives to many social media platforms. We follow technology scholars (e.g., Gillespie, 2010; van Dijck, 2013) in using the term *platform* to refer to technologies that not only

facilitate but also influence the activities they mediate. Educational research has tended to concentrate on more popular platforms such as Facebook and particularly Twitter (Greenhow & Askari, 2017; Greenhow et al., 2020). However, scholars have considered informal learning on many platforms, including Reddit (Haythornthwaite et al., 2018; Staudt Willet & Carpenter, 2020), YouTube (Lange, 2019), Pinterest (Hu et al., 2018), Voxer (Carpenter & Green, 2017), MySpace (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009), and the education-specific Edmodo (Krutka et al., 2014).

Key to understanding any educational technology or social media platform is a thorough evaluation of its design, its governance, and the values underlying these practices. As an example of design, Facebook's choice of "a 'like' button betrays an ideological predilection: it favors instant, gut-fired, emotional, positive evaluations" (van Dijck, 2013, p. 14). These "likes" are easily collected and acted on as data (see van Dijck, 2013); whatever their ideological shortcomings, they provide a simple metric by which the platform's operator and users can justify evaluation or intervention. Although educational platforms likewise provide "massive administrative, systems, academic, and student learning data... more educational data does not always make better educational data" (Ifenthaler & Tracey, 2016, p. 877; see also van Dijck & Poell, 2018). Thus, those employing educational platforms must look beyond design and data to underlying ethics and values—two concepts understudied in the field of educational technology (Gray & Boling, 2016; Moore & Ellsworth, 2014, p. 113). In short, although researchers have considered how learning practices may look different on different platforms (e.g., Staudt Willet, 2019; Staudt Willet & Carpenter, 2020) or even within different contexts on the same platform (e.g., Greenhalgh, 2021; Greenhalgh et al., 2020), there is more work to be done in reflecting on these platforms.

Formal and Informal Learning

It is widely held that informal learning can (and, implicitly, should) inform and support formal in-school learning. We emphasize, however, that social media is "a space for learning with *varying attributes of formality and informality*" (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016, p. 7, emphasis in original). Thus, while we continue to use the formal/informal dichotomy throughout this paper, we acknowledge that it is an oversimplification of the more complex reality of learning—through social media and more broadly.

In asserting the value of these *informal* instances of learning, scholars have often suggested that understanding them is key to improving learning in *formal* settings. This assumption and strategy predate social media as we currently know it (e.g.,

Gee, 2003; Smith, 1998). For example, Greenhow and Robelia (2009) suggested that understanding adolescents' "experiences, communication, and literacy practices in out-of-school online social contexts is essential to building on them within schools" (p. 1131). However, in this paper, we question the assumption that online informal learning is (always) educational and desirable in formal learning spaces.

The Rise of "Alternative" Social Media

As social media platforms have grown, they have struggled with content moderation—managing the vast amounts of information posted to their platforms by incredibly diverse users around the world (Gillespie, 2018; Roberts, 2019). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and YouTube long maintained a hands-off approach to content moderation despite frequent calls to address hate speech, conspiracy theories, and other problematic content—and back-end algorithms that often amplified them. Although online right-wing extremism has a long history, this came to a head in many ways during the contested 2016 U.S. presidential election and the Brexit vote (Conway et al., 2019; Frenkel et al., 2018).[1] In the summer of 2016, former Facebook moderators alleged that Facebook routinely suppressed right-leaning stories from its "Trending Topics" news section (Nunez, 2016), leading to conservative outrage. At the same time, misinformation, as well as conspiracy theories and alarmist posts, about Brexit and U.S. presidential candidates spread rapidly across social media in 2016 and thereafter.

Partly in response to widespread concern about the spread of mis- and disinformation from 2016 onward, many social media platforms pledged to "do better." They hired more content moderators, adjusted their algorithms, responded quicker to flagged posts, and tightened community guidelines regarding what was allowed (McIlroy-Young & Anderson, 2019; Nurik, 2019). These moves angered conservatives, who sometimes purposefully violated community standards and then claimed political targeting. At other times, platforms' responses to mis- and disinformation were seen as politically biased, even when (or sometimes because) platforms tried to appear even-handed. For example, Facebook and other platforms were critiqued for deferring to the Southern Poverty Law Center (Grind & McKinnon, 2019)—but also for incorporating perspectives from the far-right Daily Caller (Rupar, 2019). As Pena (2020) wrote, "After the 2016 [U.S. presidential] election tech companies were criticized for not doing enough to stop disinformation. Just weeks before Election Day [2020], social media giants are facing big criticism from conservative voices who say they have gone too far" (para. 1; see also Freelon et al., 2020, who

suggest that right-wing individuals see "big tech" as "irredeemably biased" [p. 1198][2]).

Footnotes

[1] Social media have long been used to circulate (and have algorithmically amplified) mis- and disinformation not just in the US and UK but also globally, often at the expense of already-marginalized populations, such as the Rohingya in Myanmar (see Smith, 2020), Muslims in Sri Lanka (De Sayrah, 2018), religious minorities in India (Mirchandani, 2018; Datta, 2014), and ethnic minorities in Nigeria (Hassan & Hitchen, 2020).

[2] On the other hand, moderate and liberal platform users argued that social media companies' efforts had not resulted in substantive changes. Furthermore, many People of Color (particularly Black women) have noted that they receive little support from platforms despite being frequently harassed, doxxed, or suspended for discussing racism (Guynn, 2020).

Because of these moves to restrict hate speech, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, many conservatives began exploring different social media platforms. Parler's membership doubled in the week following the U.S. 2020 Presidential election, for example (Hayes, 2020; Isaac & Browning, 2020). Gab and Parler, in particular, featured heavily in the mainstream media as alternatives to mainstream social media platforms, but many other platforms welcomed new users as well (including MeWe, BitChute, 4chan, 8chan, Discord, Minds, Telegram, and Voat). As Rogers (2020) noted, when deplatforming gathered speed in 2018 and 2019, "the migration from mainstream to alternative social media platforms was underway" (p. 214). Freelon et al. (2020) explained, "although alt-tech platforms are much smaller than their mainstream counterparts, they allow partisan and fringe communities to exist without opposition from alternative viewpoints" (p. 1199).

In short, platforms such as Gab and Parler position themselves as "free speech" alternatives in response to mainstream platforms' moderation of extremist rhetoric and political misinformation. For example, Parler's community guidelines in fall 2020 stated that "In no case will Parler decide what will content [sic] be removed or filtered..." (Parler, 2020, para. 3). However, research on Gab has suggested that "free speech" translates in practice to unchecked hate speech and conspiracy theories (Zannettou et al., 2018; see also Aliapoulios et al., 2021; Trujillo et al., 2020).

"Miseducation" as a Conceptual Framework

There is no universally accepted definition of "learning," and this can cause confusion when educators and scholars attempt to identify the conditions in which it is likely to occur. The rise of standardized curriculum and testing has often defined "learning" in terms of snapshots of disciplinary knowledge on multiple choice tests (Gee, 2003; Kohn, 2000), but scholars in education, instructional design, and other fields have sought to offer more nuanced and meaningful definitions of "learning." The sociocultural perspectives on learning described above are included among these more nuanced definitions, which likely helps explain their popularity in describing informal learning through social media (in contrast, more "standardized" views of learning may call into question social media's educational potential; see Barbetta et al., 2019). Yet, such a broad view of learning invites an almost-instinctive criticism: Can *anything* be considered learning? Perhaps so, but Gee (2003) noted that some kinds of learning support social justice while others do not—and expressed hope that students will gravitate toward the former.

Distinguishing among learning experiences can give educators and instructional designers important tools for considering informal learning more deeply. Indeed, Dewey (1938) believed educators should determine whether experiences are more *educative* or *miseducative*. He argued that "any experience can be miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25) and that educators must therefore assess the *direction* of learning experiences. Whether an experience is ultimately educative or miseducative depends on two components of Dewey's theory of experience: continuity and interaction. Continuity requires that an individual both show growth and develop attitudes and habits that create the conditions for future growth. Interaction is related to inner habits and attitudes as well as to the larger environment in which learning takes place. Thus, experiences must not only lead to individual and moral growth but also to that which is good for society. Therefore, educators must "specify the direction in which growth takes places, the ends towards which it tends" (p. 36). Yet, even Dewey's own writings that associated technological progress with civilization (in contrast to the racist idea of "barbarism") could be considered evidence of racist miseducation (see Kendi, 2016).

We therefore turn to critical scholars who have long confronted the ways that Whiteness has been miseducational. Carter G. Woodson (1933) famously described how "the mis-education of the Negro" took place through school curriculum that distorted Black history through a racist lens of White superiority. In this sense, Black Americans were encouraged to either reject Blackness or embrace

Whiteness, even though neither direction addressed the ways in which systemic and structural racism restricted Black opportunity. The reality of miseducation has also been documented and recognized for students of other minoritized groups (An, 2016; Díaz & Deroo, 2020; Sabzalian, 2019; Takaki, 2008). A vast amount of scholarship has been published over the last hundred years detailing all the ways that schools miseducate students through official (i.e., what is explicitly taught), hidden (e.g., what is implicitly taught), and null (e.g., what is excluded) curriculum (Milner, 2017; see also Kentli, 2009). For example, Anyon's (1980) famous study showed how schools taught a hidden curriculum of work based on the dominant social class of the community. Educators might therefore judge any spaces including oppressive ideologies as miseducational in character.

Implications of Gab and Parler for Education

In the remainder of this paper, we discuss what the examples of Gab and Parler suggest for future work on the intersection of informal learning and social media. In doing so, we touch on the same three areas that we addressed in our brief literature review above: conceptual frameworks, social media platforms, and connections between informal and formal learning.

Studying Informal *Miseducation* on Social Media Platforms

Sociocultural conceptual frameworks that have been used to argue that learning is happening on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook can also be used to suggest that it is happening on platforms such as Gab and Parler—but of what nature and direction? Conway and colleagues (2019) described far-right extremists' use of "memes, specialised jokes, and jargon… as a means of identity creation and formation for users both new and old" (p. 12). Similarly, participation in communities embracing the QAnon conspiracy theory requires engagement with cryptic posts released by the eponymous Q, a supposed operative in Donald Trump's alleged conflict with "a worldwide cabal of Satan-worshiping pedophiles who rule the world" (Rozsa, 2019, section 1).

These examples demonstrate ways that people understand *meaning* (e.g., Joe Biden's upcoming arrest) by engaging with *texts* (e.g., a "Q drop") and thereby joining *communities* (as seen in the QAnon motto "Where We Go One, We Go All") by adopting associated *identities* (as an Anon or a "Q patriot"). As such, they correspond with Gee's (2003, 2007)[1] work on how people learn in technology-rich spaces—as well as other New Literacies approaches to informal learning. Even education professionals who do not embrace Gee's approach should take notice of the way that members of the online American far right explicitly talk of teaching

others to hold their views (as "red-pilling" them; Evans, 2018) and of their own learning of those views (as "being red-pilled"). In this subculture, red-pilling becomes synonymous with a specific *direction* of learning (Ganesh, 2018).

 However, it is important not to overlook miseducation on the more mainstream platforms that have been embraced in education and have vastly larger reach. For example, Lewis (2018) documented how far-right influencers have used YouTube to guide their audiences "from mainstream to extreme content" (p. 1; see also Conway et al., 2019; Lavin, 2020). In short, while the education community might instinctively be concerned about platforms like Gab and Parler, teachers, instructional designers, parents, and researchers should also be wary of the larger amounts of miseducative content that likely exist in parallel with the YouTube videos, Facebook groups, and Twitter hashtags that they have generally endorsed for learners.

Footnotes

[1] Thank you to Chris Dennis Myers, a student of Spencer's who made this connection between Gee and QAnon and has generously allowed us to share it in this manuscript.

If this miseducative kind of learning is happening informally in social media spaces, what are the implications for education and instructional design professionals? Although (most) education professionals would be uneasy with this kind of learning, the response must not be to redefine learning so as to exclude these very real phenomena. On the contrary—acknowledging that *miseducation* is happening is critical. Education and educational technology researchers should study informal learning in places like Gab and Parler, acknowledging that society benefits from understanding miseducation, not just education. Documenting harmful learning happening on alternative platforms is important not because it is exemplary but because it is nonetheless happening—and miseducation along with it.

Furthermore, teachers need to carefully consider whether and how content acquisition and assessment in their classroom correspond with broader social goals (or problems). For example, ClassDojo produces behavior data that may appear to be an objective assessment but instead reflect sociocultural expectations of behavior and compliance, which historically result in disproportionate punishment for Black and Latinx students. Instructional designers need to reflect on the role of ethics and value in design (Gray & Boling, 2016) and beware of discriminatory design often built into platforms (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018);

they should consider what techniques and models promote not just "effective learning" but an education that is responsive, just, and sustaining (Paris, 2012). Morris's (2021) call for contributors to a critical instructional design reader offers an example of such work that addresses ableist design assumptions; however, true change will come not from specific recommendations or bounded examples but from thorough reflection (see Gray & Boling, 2016; Ifenthaler & Tracey, 2016; Moore & Ellsworth, 2014 for some guidelines). Especially important to encouraging more equitable design is centering the voices of marginalized communities, particularly People of Color, in responsive and sustaining ways.

More broadly, scholars studying "learning" on social media infrequently touch on the *direction* of learning in larger social contexts (contra. Rodríguez et al., 2020; Shelton et al., 2020). This is not surprising, as social media data often conceal the larger educational context, psychological impact, or social worthiness which Dewey (1938) believed were necessary to distinguish between educative and miseducative experiences. He argued that educators must evaluate both the continuity and interaction of experiences—and we extend this argument to research considering social media. Evaluating whether a space or particular experience is educational or miseducational can be challenging, but critical scholars like Carter G. Woodson (1933) have long identified the ways curriculum can be oppressive and miseducative. Considering whether social media spaces are educational requires educators and scholars to give close attention to the social dynamics of participants and context. Qualitative data, triangulation of sources, and the inclusion of counter-story telling are of particular importance for researchers seeking to move toward just understandings of what is education and miseducational (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Studying Social Media as *Designed Platforms*, not Neutral Learning Spaces

Gab and Parler serve as compelling examples of informal learning environments that are miseducational (in part) because of their design and governance. Van Dijck (2013) has argued that the technical design and governing policies of a social media platform are informed by its underlying values and—ultimately—business model, which can reflect the sociocultural biases of the designers (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018). For example, in 2006, Facebook's design was changed from prioritizing users' pages (which needed to be checked individually) to prioritizing a personalized News Feed that aggregated information of presumed interest. This aggregation and automatic presentation encouraged users to spend more time on the site, which ultimately contributed to Facebook's revenues.

In the case of Gab and Parler, it is governing policies that are more obviously informed by platform values and profitability—and that more obviously contribute to miseducation. Whereas a wise and responsive classroom teacher would facilitate a classroom discussion by establishing norms and providing boundaries, Gab's barebones moderation policies—driven by its positioning itself as a free speech platform—result in a proliferation of hate speech, conspiratorial theorizing, and far right content (Zannettou et al., 2018). This is all the more striking given that both Gab and Parler explicitly engage in *some* moderation (Colburn & McCarter, 2020; Torba, 2020b) while defending users' right to post conspiracy theories or White nationalist content. An implicit—or, in the case of Gab, explicit (Torba, 2020a)—acceptance of QAnon (and other problematic material) when these platforms have shown a willingness to moderate other content is a deliberate governance choice that has obvious effects on whether informal learning on the platform will be educational or miseducational in the aggregate.

As we have already seen, the influence of design on (mis)education is not limited to these extreme examples. Twitter's hesitance to moderate content has resulted in criticism "for allowing a culture of harassment to fester largely unchecked on its service" (Gillespie, 2018, p. 24), and Hao (2021) argued that Facebook's commitment to engagement and continual growth is inseparable from—and amplifies—the misinformation and hate speech that circulate on the platform (see also Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Learners, instructors, and instructional designers who want to integrate social media into the learning process must understand the ways in which these platforms' underlying values and business models may affect the learning process.

Furthermore, van Dijck and Poell (2018) argued that there is value in looking at educational technologies (i.e., beyond repurposed social media) not just "as tools, but as *platforms*, driven by a complex interplay between technical architectures, business models, and mass user activity" (p. 579, emphasis in original). In short, if "Facebook is for getting likes" (Frier, 2020, p. 234), researchers and students might wonder what Canvas is "for"—that is, how does a platform communicate success, and does it correspond with success as defined by educators? Careful examination of educational technologies may reveal ways in which they "are pushing a new concept of learning that uproots or bypasses the values that are fundamental to publicly funded education" (van Dijck et al., 2018; see also Kerssens & van Dijck, 2021). Thus, Williamson's (2017) careful consideration of the popular *ClassDojo* app raised concerns about shoring up surveillance and behaviorism, and Krutka and colleagues' (2021) technoethical audit of Google identified underlying values that are at odds with educational ones.

Designers—instructional and otherwise—create environments where certain behaviors are encouraged and others are discouraged. It is, therefore, critical that they reflect on their ethics and values—and how they inform design (Gray & Boling, 2016). Then, instructional designers could conduct their own technoethical audits (Krutka et al., 2019) of learning management systems (LMS) and other technology platforms like Zoom (Krutka et al., 2020) to determine how they support or conflict with those ethics and values. If, for example, an online class is committed to respectful and deep discussion that also protects students (particularly those most often targeted), instructional designers might ask how discussion boards and other LMS features promote—or dissuade—those values. Based on that evaluation, designers might prompt teachers to democratically establish explicit class norms with students, rather than allow the LMS to implicitly establish norms through its design.

What values are programmed into the apps, ed tech platforms, and repurposed social media sites that are being used in (and out of) classrooms all over the world? Do those who retrieve data from these platforms for data-intensive educational research (e.g., Baker & Siemens, 2015; Greenhalgh et al., 2021; Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2017; Rosenberg et al., 2021) look for miseducational values embedded in these "big data" or assume them to be objective (see D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020) and inherently educational? Is the design of a platform discriminatory and miseducative (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018)? Again, consulting communities of color—as one step in the process of design—can be a way to minimize miseducative impacts.

Studying the *Relationship* Between Informal Miseducation and Formal Education

Research on *informal* learning often expresses a hope or expectation that it will subsequently influence learning in *formal* settings. For example, in introducing their research on the use of social media in secondary writing instruction, Galvin and Greenhow (2020) noted that this phenomenon is inspired by the vast amount of writing young learners are already doing on social media and by work that conceptualizes this informal writing as supporting formal writing. Yet, the possibility (even likelihood?) of the informal learning of White nationalism and conspiracy theories on platforms such as Gab, Parler, or Facebook turns these assumptions on their head—and raises the importance of a formal education that can withstand and undo any informal *miseducation* students are undergoing. Indeed, Koul (2020) reported on teachers' responses to students' bringing conspiracy theories into class, and research suggests that students who are asked to evaluate evidence on a controversial issue often ignore credible evidence for

what they have previously learned online (Crocco et al., 2018).

The steps needed to bring about a formal learning that is educational are numerous and significant enough that we cannot hope to address them in this paper. Nor are they likely to be easily adopted. In 1997, Thompson expressed concern that anti-racism "sounds too… provocative" (p. 8) for educators to embrace as a philosophy. Nearly a quarter of a century later, the Trump administration's *1776 Commission* (which advocated for "patriotic education" in response to anti-racist critiques of American history; see Crowley & Schuessler, 2021) suggests that not much has changed. Efforts at "patriotic" education and White master narratives of American progress have long pervaded social studies education (Busey & Walker, 2017; Evans, 2004; Johnson, 2019; Sabzalian, 2019; Vickery, 2017), and anti-Black misinformation has long been part of the Black experience in the US (Woodson et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, the importance and exigency of removing miseducation from schools cannot be understated. Alim and Paris (2017) suggested that for People of Color in the United States, "The purpose of state-sanctioned schooling has been to forward the largely assimilationist and often violent White imperial project" (p. 1). Not only is such an approach to formal learning incapable of adequately resisting White nationalist learning happening in informal spaces, but implicit messages of White supremacy in schools may actually serve as a jumping off point for students to (mis)learn more on the internet.

Perhaps more worrying is the very real possibility of teachers bringing conspiratorial and nationalist thinking into classrooms. After the insurrection at the Capitol, it became clear that some of those visiting Washington, D.C. and either involved with or sympathetic to the rioters were employed as teachers (Koop, 2021; Peiser, 2021; Tavernise & Rosenberg, 2021). Teachers' uses of social media are well documented (Greenhow et al., 2020), and it should come as no surprise to learn that educators are using alternative social media platforms as well. Lee (2021) noted that in March 2021, one of the most popular private groups on Gab appeared to be associated with teachers. Given that misinformation, conspiracy theories, and White supremacist thinking are not limited to platforms like Gab and Parler—and that teachers' personal and (several) professional uses of platforms blur (Carpenter et al., 2019; Carpenter et al., 2020; Greenhalgh et al., 2016)—there is ample room for concern.

Whether it is students or teachers who are bringing miseducation into the classroom, educational professionals have responsibilities to respond to and effectively counter it. For example, although media reports help to identify this phenomenon, scholarly research is needed to more clearly define the scope of the

problem and the mechanisms by which it happens. In particular, Barron's (2006) research on learning ecologies that span in- and out-of-school contexts serves as a model for how researchers might document more worrying versions of this phenomenon. Furthermore, instructional designers' important influence on the development and delivery of curricula in many educational contexts suggests that they may play a role in ensuring those contexts are truly educational—and can withstand miseducation. Finally, teacher educators, schools, districts, and professional organizations have the responsibility to ensure that pre- and in-service teachers are committed to promoting educational experiences that are responsive, just, and sustaining (Paris, 2012).

Conclusion

Although social media platforms continue to hold considerable promise for informal learning, the emergence of platforms like Gab and Parler serves as an important opportunity for instructional designers and educational professionals to reconsider the relationship between informal learning, (mis)education, and social media platforms. Gab and Parler offer illustrative examples of *miseducational* informal learning spaces, the ways that technology design can foster that miseducation, and the importance of asking how miseducation influences (or happens within) formal learning settings. Yet, while it may be beneficial for education professionals to consider these implications in the immediate context of Gab and Parler, these controversial platforms are ultimately a reminder of the importance of applying these ideas to other social media platforms, educational technology platforms, and ultimately all formal and informal learning settings.

Instructional design and other educational professionals should be concerned about and attentive to (mis)educational and (mis)informational opportunities across an array of social media platforms. Although somewhat contrived, the formal/informal dichotomy of learning can help draw attention to the ways that informal learning on social media connects to formal classroom learning. We have evidence that informal learning through social media is occurring, but at least some of it is miseducational and potentially explicitly harmful to marginalized communities. Online platforms are not neutral (learning) spaces; they need to be carefully constructed, with ethical principles in mind.

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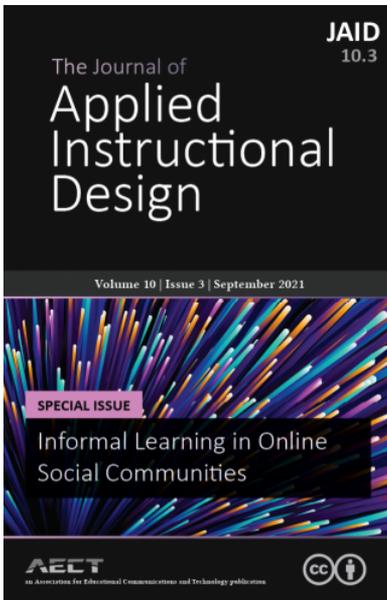
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