

Raising Our Voices

Collaborating for Justice with Open Education

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Abstract

Focusing on equity is a useful endeavor, but it can feel abstract. What does it mean to use the lens of equity to transform student success? For us, it means centering student voices and experiences, revolutionizing our textbooks and course builds, and transforming our teaching. Our goal is to create books and courses that are freely available, valid, and written by diverse teams from the field. More specifically, the Open Oregon Educational Resources Targeted Pathways Project is developing free, openly licensed textbooks and courses in Introduction to Sociology, Social Change, Social Problems, and Sociology of Gender. Our development model seeks to dismantle structures of power and oppression entrenched in barriers to course material access. We provide tools and resources to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) primary considerations when faculty choose, adapt, and create course materials. Here we share the dream, the model, and the steps that this collaborative statewide team took to create books, design courses, and pilot them successfully with students. The process includes an intersectional DEI approach to editing, multiple revisions for inclusion and diversity from the community, and a focus on accessibility for all. We will also share the preliminary outcomes of our work. A discussion of the steps and vision with expert peers guides our next steps.

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Introduction

Open Oregon Educational Resources is a statewide program dedicated to textbook affordability within Oregon's public higher education institutions. By offering training, consultations, grants, and faculty incentives, the program actively encourages the widespread adoption of open, low-cost, and high-quality educational materials (Open Oregon Educational Resources, n.d.). In 2021, as part of its ongoing initiatives, the program secured grant funding from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to improve student success in Oregon higher education and provide free, high-quality textbooks and courses that engage students in thinking critically about the challenging issues of our world. This led to a focus on producing twelve open textbooks and courses in Sociology, Human Development and Family Studies, and Criminal Justice (Hofer, 2023).

To enact these objectives, the establishment of an interdisciplinary statewide learning community of instructors, students, and other professionals focused on creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive work, using open educational resources (OER) and open, engaged pedagogy to build and support the work. The learning community would critically interrogate current teaching resources in the disciplines and create powerful alternatives to center diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This is how the Targeted Pathways project began, and a minimal project team was assembled that included one project manager, instructional designer, equity consultant, instructional editor, research consultant, and two discipline leads to support 12 lead authors and 20 contributing authors. Over the course of three plus years and across 19 public community colleges and universities, the community grew to include 58 authors, 39 instructors, 26 workforce advisory board members, 25 editors, multiple project managers, equity consultants, instructional designers, development consultants, and numerous community leaders and activists.

We had a grand vision to build a resilient and resourceful community. Using open pedagogy and open education to transform how we teach sociology and dismantle systems of oppression, we discussed how we retain students using open strategies and technology because textbooks and courses are free, and because we engage equity-minded design frameworks to support active student engagement in the classroom and community. The way we chose to do this work together, in addition to the products we produced, was transformational. This collaboration allowed us to create and sustain a culture of innovation and social justice. This article includes an appendix featuring examples of texts, coursepacks, and assignments to serve as illustrative references.

Our Stories

As we explored how the power of open education made us better instructors and learners, we started with our stories. Our students, instructors, authors, and project team experienced transformation while we created textbooks and courses that were more diverse, more equitable, and more inclusive. We created models that explored racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other intersections of social location. We explored our own anti-racist power to support social justice, supporting the full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs (Bell et al., 2007).

In the course SOC 206: Social Problems (Puttman, et. al, 2024), students begin an exploration of the social world by telling stories. This is part of our radical questioning of our traditional research and teaching paradigm. In our approach, we start with personal experience. In our class, you may hear stories about how COVID-19 made us lonely and disconnected. More than that, you may hear what it felt like to know your grandmother died alone. You may listen to how empowering it was to protest during Black Lives Matter or the pain of being called racist names. You may hear how not being listened to by doctors resulted in lack of access to medical care for transgender students, and you may even tell your own story.

In telling and hearing these stories, we find respect, belonging, and empathy. While none of us were required to share our personal suffering or our resilience, when we did, we engaged the power of authenticity. This became the grounding for our work as sociologists together, discovering the historical, generational, and current causes and consequences of oppression. These stories also became our framework as community builders and activists, identifying effective ways to challenge that oppression.

But first, let's listen....

Innovation for Justice

Although the learning community shared a common commitment to equity and diversity, our challenge was to articulate a vision and set of practices that would support this audacious work. In collaboration, we developed the following equity statement:

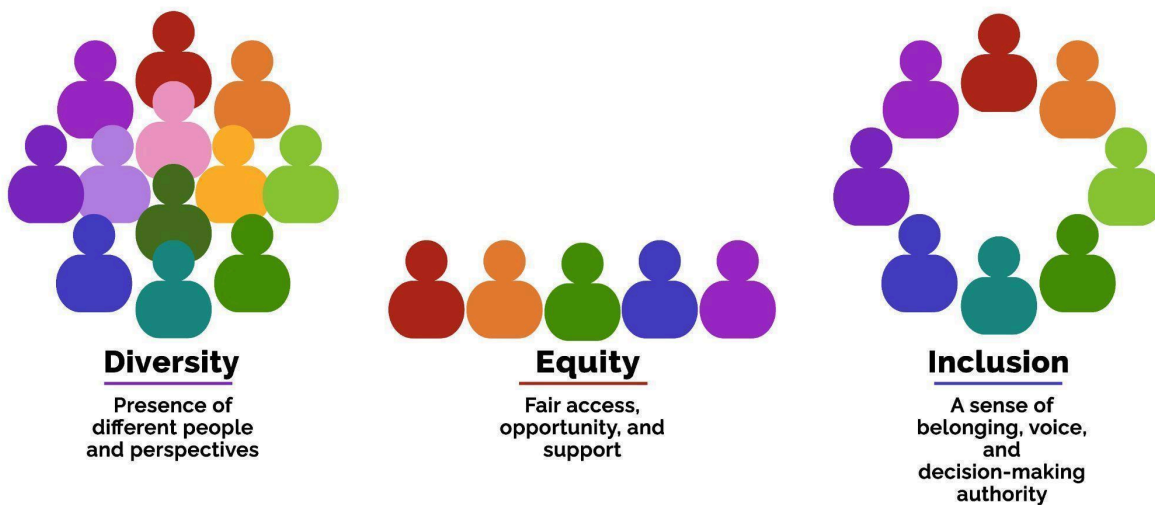
The Open Oregon Educational Resources Course and Textbook Development Model seeks to dismantle structures of power and oppression entrenched in barriers to course material access. We provide tools and resources to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) primary considerations when faculty choose, adapt, and create course materials. In promoting DEI, our project is committed to:

- (1) Ensuring diversity of representation within our team and the materials we distribute
- (2) Publishing materials that use accessible, clear language for our target audience
- (3) Sharing course materials that directly address and interrogate systems of oppression, equipping students and educators with the knowledge to do the same (Blicher, et al, 2023 1.4).

In this statement, we recognize our work is to address inequalities created by overlapping systems of oppression. Our free, openly licensed, quality textbooks and courses support social justice.

Defining DEI and centering equity in all that we do is the highest priority. We see that, “equity is grounded in the principle of fairness. In higher education, equity refers to ensuring that each student receives what they need to be successful through the intentional design of the college experience” (Jhangiani, 2018). We illustrate this commitment visually in addition to writing it. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

*Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as an Illustration***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Definitions from "Pub 101" by the Open Education Network Publishing Curriculum, which are adapted from "Diversity, Equity, And Inclusion: Learnings & Next Steps: An Opencon Report On Conference Planning" by SPARC, which is licensed under CC BY 4.0. Design by Heather Blicher, Valencia Scott, and Michaela Willi Hooper. Open Oregon Educational Resources, CC BY 4.0.



Note: [Image description](#)

To clarify and advance the work of authors on the project, the leadership team developed an online course which was elevated into what we informally refer to as the *DEI toolkit* titled, [Doing the Work: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Open Educational Resources](#). The course outcomes are:

1. Recognize how DEI intersects with every aspect of this project and OER.
2. Describe the value of DEI for authors and students.
3. Realize the potential to create a curriculum that is both antiracist and inclusive of multiple intersecting human experiences.
4. Develop the courage and humility necessary to reassess one's own perspective.
5. Practice using tools and strategies to promote equity in textbook and course design (Blicher et al., 2023 Introduction).

In the anchor module of the toolkit, the equity consultants write, "Leading with an equity lens in curriculum design means shining a light on underrepresented perspectives, centering them, and diving deeper into the histories of systemic oppression that lead to social injustices and disparities we live with today" (Blicher & Scott, n.d., 1.1 So what is an equity lens?).

Additionally, equity consultants collaborated with project team members to create a living document of words as an inclusive language priorities document for authors. The [word list](#) includes

appropriate terminology and inappropriate or outdated terminology relating to race, culture, movements, etc. It also defines words and gives examples of their use to avoid confusion and support authors in their writing (Blicher 2024). Blicher (2024) writes, “We sought out resources for inclusive language including the PFLAG National Glossary (PFLAG, n.d.), the Racial Equity Tools Glossary (Racial Equity Tools, 2023), and various articles to explore complicated scenarios.

Together, these elements provided a collaborative organizational infrastructure to transform teaching and learning. From the authors’ personal experiences, often students and instructors, particularly at small colleges, lack colleagues, infrastructure, and technology that is needed to truly innovate. Even at larger colleges, it is difficult to sustain organizational transformation, especially when the transformation challenges dominant culture.

In drafting and piloting 12 books and courses across the disciplines, the work is one way to create equity for instructors, people who often experience academic precarity (Flaherty, 2020). Beyond stabilizing economically, we are a community of practice that helps each other develop new tools to promote anti-racism and increase social justice. Personal transformation is reflected in our writing and in our courses. Eighty-eight percent of our pilot instructors made changes in their courses as part of this work (A. Hofer, personal communication, August 29, 2024).

Over two years, we conducted more than 56 pilots. While not all participating institutions have reported yet, we estimate 1,000 students have saved approximately \$140,000 to date (A. Hofer, personal communication, August 29, 2024). Even more powerful is that our students are more engaged and more confident. At least 70% of students reported improvement in affective outcomes including:

- 93% reported being more interested
- 73% reported being more engaged
- 70% reported being more motivated
- 77% reported being more confident (A. Hofer, personal communication, August 29, 2024).

Open Pedagogy Challenges Oppression

In our current polarized society, both instructors and students are challenged to discuss power and privilege in respectful but transformative ways. Our classroom analysis of diversity and equity requires effective models to name and examine both power and privilege. In order to name and examine power and privilege, we rely on key principles of universal design for learning (UDL), including providing multiple means of representation. Research shows that students benefit from engaging information in multiple modes, including illustrations, simulations, images, videos, and graphics, rather than relying on a single mode (CAST, 2024). Generating multiple visual models ensures that information can be relatable and comprehensible, especially for students with disabilities and potential language barriers (CAST, 2024). To support this inquiry, project team members built a new visual model, expanding on the work of others. (See Figure 2).

For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p.72).

Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1994) builds on Freire's idea, adding that classrooms can be spaces in which conflicts and tension can result in transformation.

Confronting each other across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth (p.113).

Although this work occurred in a messy and organic way, we share the process as four steps to make the journey easier to follow.

Step 1: Initial Student Engagement

In our first Social Problems class of the term, we presented [Sylvia Duckworth's \(2020\)](#) version of the wheel. We talked about what a privilege was—how laws, policies, and practices give unearned advantages to people in some social groups. We talked about how being “marginalized” doesn't mean that you are a person of less worth. It means that you have less access to power.

Even in this short discussion, students suggested improvements to the model. To explore that opportunity, our assessment for the week asked students to draw their own wheel and reflect on whether this model helped them understand their own experiences. The resulting images helped us as instructors reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the model. By inviting students to create their own models to show their social location, we followed Daniela Gachago, Maha Bali, and Nicola Pallitt's (n.d.) compassionate learning design framework. This framework adapts Nan Wehipeihana's (Gachago et al., n.d.) model on indigenous evaluation, inviting students to create knowledge by and as themselves, rather than having knowledge presented to or for them .

Step 2: Reimagination of the Wheel with Visual Artists

Our instructors and authors engaged with visual and graphic artists to create new images. This practice supported equity because it gave instructors access to richer resources. Together the artist and the author talked about the image, asking questions like, “what would make it seem more like a continuum of power?”, or “which ‘pie slices’ would we add if we could?”

Step 3: Iteration

The conversations and related drafts went through several iterations. For example, the class reviewed the sociological relevance of each category in works including Hill Collins' *Learning From the Outsider Within* (1986), Marx's *Das Kapital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), Johnson's *Privilege, Power and Difference* (2018), McIntosh's *White privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1989) and others. Through these works, the class confirmed that economic class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability/disability categories were essential in this model. We looked deeper, adding more

precise categories to engage in a more nuanced discussion. For example, we incorporated the work of Geronimus (2021), emphasising that health itself could be a privilege. As we went further into embodiment, we saw that neurodivergence and body size matters (Nutter et al., 2016; Walker & Raymaker, 2021). Race matters as a whole (Bullard, 1990), and so does the perceived color of your skin (Hunter, 2007), as well as your ethnicity (Roy, 2021). Class matters, including debt and financial stability (Robinson, 2000), but so does whether you have stable housing (Lee et al., 2010), whether you live in the country (Rural Health Information Hub, 2022), and the power of your educational experiences and attainment (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Additionally, belonging here also matters, whether you were born to a place, your ancestors settled here long ago, or your family just arrived (Galeano, 1971).

In another iteration, we added the various oppressive structures and practices on the outside of the wheel (Esses, 2023; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2022). This focus on naming oppressive systems and behaviours draws on Butler's (2023) modern feminist theory, Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) and Kendi's (2019) critical race theory, and Raymaker's (2021) queer theory. These models also reminded us that language matters, so we changed their emphasis on English and French to focus on only English. We used an additional Canadian model to clarify the privilege of robust mental health (Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, 2007). As we examined this model within our collaborative team, we discerned more. For example, a co-author proposed the language which named the imprecise, unstable, and ever-changing nature of what appears as a fixed model. With each iteration, our model became more focused on social justice.

Step 4: Student Re-engagement

The conversation with students in the class on social change occurred during the subsequent term. We asked them how this new model helped them better explain social change. Student feedback illustrates several new aspects: the shading in the boxes helps them understand that power and oppression are a continuum rather than a fixed point in time.

Open Engaged Pedagogy as the Practice of Freedom

The process of centering student voices uses open pedagogy. In a discussion within *A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students*, DeRosa and Jhangiani (2017) state that open pedagogy is a course design approach that prioritizes student access and agency in the process of creating knowledge. We define open pedagogy as a practice in which students are creators of openly licensed content for a real-world audience (DeRosa & Jhangiani, 2017). More broadly, open educational practices are a spectrum of strategies that includes interaction with, or creation of, content that is not under all-rights-reserved copyright (Pearce et al., n.d.) Students can create renewable assignments rather than disposable assignments, assignments that have no application outside the limited duration of a course (DeRosa & Jhangiani, 2017).

In addition, we use open pedagogy to support engaged pedagogy. The process of creating a model of power transforms students and instructors alike. To paraphrase bell hooks (1994), engaged pedagogy is education as the practice of freedom. hooks states,

Our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (p. 13).

This creates change, similar to what hooks (1994) writes when she discusses social class.

My awareness of class...has helped me to employ pedagogical strategies that create ruptures in the established order, that promote modes of learning which challenge bourgeois hegemony. One such strategy has been the emphasis on creating in classrooms learning communities where everyone's voice can be heard, their presence recognized and valued (p. 186).

We were delighted to have a powerful chart to share with others, but our creative process of praxis was even more important in understanding and challenging structural oppression.

Engaged Pedagogy Pushes Boundaries

Using open textbooks and engaged pedagogy, our students push the boundaries of social identity and power. In addition to promoting multiple means of representation, UDL challenges instructors to create opportunities for multiple means of student expression (CAST, 2024). Our courses took on this challenge by inviting students to create visual art rather than focusing on textual analysis alone. One student critically examined gender identity and gender transition. They created art to convey the prejudice they experienced from the medical community. The image in Figure 3 conveys the doctor's understanding that gender can only be experienced in a binary way, as only female or male. This underpins the limited belief that transitioning means to fulfill one of those specific gender identities.

Figure 3

Student art, "So, you want to transition?"



Note: © EME, Student Soc 205 and 206 is all rights reserved and included with permission

[Image description](#)

When you examine the picture from the perspective of the transgender person, you see both a key and a chain. The chain represents how a transgender person is often chained to the binary during medical transition. The key represents how a non-binary person would want to break away from the binary the medical system puts on them to meet the transition goals they have. In a class assignment, the student (2023) writes:

Being able to be a part of progress for the future, and being able to influence the learning of people like me who take Sociology was an unexpectedly heart-warming experience. During the class itself, it didn't feel that impactful. However, as the class was coming to a close, I got the sense that my, and the rest of my class, were going to change the class just as much as the class changed us.

I also got the opportunity. After noticing a gap in knowledge in the textbook about medical discrimination for trans people, I wrote an essay detailing the issues that trans people like myself deal with while trying to transition. While it was relevant then, it seems even more relevant now. When asked to elaborate artistically, as a nonbinary person myself, I was able to delve more into the feelings associated with such discrimination - frustration, helplessness, anger, and shame. After sharing this essay and the art pieces illustrating my points, I felt that my efforts were actually going to do something beyond fulfilling the necessities of the assignment (EME, personal communication, March 30, 2023).

This experience in open pedagogy supports the student in telling their truth. By giving students the opportunity to share their work in online discussion forums and when gathering in classrooms, their classmates can learn from this example. As a result of this student's work, another student changed the topic of her paper from *women's* reproductive rights to *people's* reproductive rights to honor the fact that not all people with uteruses identify as women. Because this art and essay can be incorporated into the course build and textbook, future students benefit.

Students also connected their lived experiences and their academic understanding as they explored their own gender, racial, and ethnic identities. This too is open, engaged pedagogy. hooks (1994) writes, "Engaged pedagogy necessarily values student expression" (p.20). In another example, a student articulated the racism embedded in cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture (O'Keefe, 2020).

Figure 4

Student Art, "Cultural Appropriation,"



Note: © Marisol is all rights reserved and included with permission. [Image Description](#)

In the student-created image in Figure 4, the student compares the fashion and makeup of Mexican American and White women. She notes that when Mexican American women wear braids and outline their lips in brown, they are called trashy. When White women appear in a similar fashion, they are called “pretty” or “cute.” Sociologists explain these differences using theories of race and gender. When this student presented her work, the class discussed cultural appropriation as part of a deeper conversation around racism and anti-racism. If we consider that anti-racism is supporting an antiracist policy through actions or expressing an antiracist idea (Kendi, 2019), we see that our students were engaging in the work of anti-racism.

Student-Centered Learning Creates Engagement

At the heart of education are the instructors and students who collaboratively create a learning environment where growth and engagement can occur. Student-centered learning creates a space where students decide what material they want to learn and how they want to learn it, as well as how they show their learning (McKenna, 2013). These practices also encourage students to personalize learning, connect more of what they learn to their world, improve participation, and make learning more enjoyable (ISTE, 2023).

As a new professor begins to teach, it is common to continue with what they know; using quizzes, papers, tests, discussions, and lectures, as the basic pedagogical practices. Some of these are wonderful learning tools and experiences for students. However, you find something is missing. The student’s personalities, personal connections to the material, and how they can apply it to their worlds are greatly lacking in this traditional approach. So, you choose to try something different: a final project that focuses solely on student choice and creativity.

In SOC 218: Sociology of Gender (Esbenson et al., 2023) this new approach to a final project becomes an opportunity for students to express what they learned from the class in a manner that they choose. This assignment incorporates transparent design methods known as transparency in learning and teaching, or TILT, developed by Mary-Ann Winkelmes (2023). This approach ensures that students are clear on the purpose, tasks, and criteria for success that guide their own knowledge-creation (Winkelmes, 2023). By making the goals of the assignment clear, students are free to dream up new ways of showing what they know. Students use their sociological imagination to explore issues that are relevant to them. The appendix includes the “coursepack” in addition to the project guidelines and rubric.

The project guidelines state that the project must show a direct relation to course material, the ability to connect concepts with sociological imagination, and the effort shown in the completion of the project. The guidelines also include a list of ideas and examples from other students. The [rubric](#) is available from the beginning of the term so students can clearly understand the expectations from the start. Even though each student’s product is different, the rubric applies to all projects. We implemented TILT in this assignment in order to deepen student learning, ensuring even greater benefits for historically underserved students (Winkelmes et al., 2016). The results were student-created mixed CDs, collages, mixed media art pieces, drawings, paintings, photography projects, and research projects. Some

students volunteer in community organizations and submit a write-up of what they learned. Other students write their own songs or choreograph a dance. These projects have shown much more learning and connection than any other measure in the courses, such as essays, quizzes, and final papers.

This final project received many reactions and feedback from students. First, students were grateful for the opportunity to express themselves in ways that mean something to them. The students applied the project to their broader career goals. They also appreciated being able to use community service learning as one of their options, so they could directly see and apply the concepts. We also had feedback that students did not realize how much they gained from the course until they expressed their learning in their own way through this project. In addition, for students who needed more structure, we added more specific instructions on how to write a final essay and how to make a playlist.

The learning does not stop with one instructor and these students. Because multiple instructors in the Pathways project share assessment strategies and pilot course builds, another instructor can use the assessment and rubric created in the first class. The innovation continues. In one non-profit organization, a student created a clothes closet for low-income job seekers. In another college, a group of students created a basic needs pantry as a way of relieving food insecurity. The students benefit in similar ways from the agency and creativity that are engendered by this final project. These stories demonstrate the power of a project that combines OER and open pedagogy to create better sociologists, students, and instructors. What was the project that led to this success?

Open Community As The Practice of Justice

Providing high-quality, free courses and textbooks supports student success and retention. The connection between reducing cost and increasing retention is well documented (Achieving the Dream, 2020). However, the work does not stop there. Our students need access to free, high-quality textbooks and courses, particularly in high enrollment areas to address part of their insecurity related to meeting their basic needs (Higher Education Coordinating Commission, 2022). However, low cost is not enough.

Our students also experience educational debt. Educational debt is the cumulative impact of fewer resources and other harm directed at students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This educational debt is a result of systemic racism, sexism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and other structural oppression. In this sense, it is not just that many of our students do not have enough money. It is also that structures of racism, sexism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and other oppressions have created a system of education that unfairly privileges some students over others. This educational debt, which has been incurred over generations, contributes to inequality in educational access and outcomes.

Open Oregon Educational Resources deliberately focuses on creating materials with an equity lens to address this debt. Resources that center the voices of traditionally under-resourced communities using equity is a powerful lens. It empowers students to connect their own stories with the theories and concepts they are learning. Social justice for students means making textbooks affordable, of course, but it also means creating communities in which students construct knowledge. According to DeRosa and Jhangiani (2017):

Embedded in the social justice commitment to making college affordable for all students is a related belief that knowledge should not be an elite domain. Knowledge consumption and knowledge creation are not separate but parallel processes, as knowledge is co-constructed, contextualized, cumulative, iterative, and recursive (Section 1, para 13).

When students know they are part of a wider learning community which uses open, engaged pedagogy, they know that what they have to say is important. Their analysis, creativity, and innovation become part of the project of social transformation. The creation and maintenance of the learning community itself promotes social justice.

The textbooks and courses transform educational debt into community cultural wealth. Educator and researcher Tara Yosso (2023) expands on this idea. Yosso (2023) argues that students of color draw upon community cultural wealth, the interdependent overlapping forms of knowledge, skills, abilities, and networks possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist racism and other forms of subordination. By connecting students to wider social networks, we increase the social capital of their community, a component of community cultural wealth. By providing models of what systems of oppression are, and analyzing when and why resistance to oppression works, we expand access to resistant capital, another component of community cultural wealth.

However, our students are not the only people who experience economic and social inequality. Our instructors do, too. Employment in higher education has shifted dramatically in the last 50 years (McGhee, 2021). Many of these instructors in the Guided Pathways project are adjuncts, part-time workers with term-to-term contracts. Eighty percent of community college instructors in Oregon are not in tenure track positions, even higher than the national percentage of 66% (Baumhardt, 2022). The composition of faculty is not unique to Oregon.

It's important to note here that a majority of higher education in the United States is now provided by part-time employees. The American Federation of Teachers (2020) surveyed instructors in 2018-2019. They summarized their findings this way:

Over the last four decades, the academic labor pool has shifted dramatically: 40 years ago, 70% of academic employees were tenured or on the tenure track. Today, that figure has flipped: 75% of faculty are not eligible for tenure, and 47% hold part-time positions (Executive Summary, para. 5).

The COVID-19 pandemic is only exacerbating the instability. Like other gig economy jobs, adjunct faculty experience unstable work, little health insurance, and few retirement benefits (Flaugherty 2020a; Flaugherty 2020b). Heather McGhee (2021) links this defunding to structures of systemic racism. As people of color entered the college system in greater numbers, federal and state funding for that system dropped.

The practice of building community for instructors and educational professionals using open, engaged pedagogy promotes economic justice. This is a powerful innovation in traditional curriculum design models in higher education. Educators in rural colleges, who are often departments of one, get

unprecedented access to videographers, instructional designers, librarians, and other professionals. These rich resources are rarely available in small colleges (Vold et al., 2022). All project participants get paid; this also contributes to the economic resilience of the community. Although the pay may be low, it is predictable. Moreover, it happens during the creation of materials, the opposite of the traditional book publishing model. By supporting excellence in transformative, transgressive teaching practices and economic justice, open educational projects sustain institutional transformation. As a way of supporting this transformation, we provide in-depth course materials in the appendix.

Conclusion

Supporting student success requires sustained, collective effort to address the intersecting structures of racism, sexism, classism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and other oppressions in our education system and our world. The tools of open education and open, engaged pedagogy enable collaboration between students, instructors, and educational professionals over time. This collaboration results in equitable, diverse, accessible courses and textbooks that center the experience of often under-resourced students, academics, and community activists. Because the textbooks are free, they begin to address the economic inequality that our students experience. Almost more importantly, by using open, engaged pedagogy, we begin to transform educational debt into community cultural wealth. That is to say, when we invite our students to create new knowledge and share it with others, they acquire the confidence that they are capable, the creativity to share their experiences, and the empowerment of knowing that their voice matters.

In addition, instructors and other educational professionals become part of a community of practice, an immersion in sharing effective teaching and learning practices. By creating a team focused on developing models and tools that examine and challenge oppression in many forms, we develop OER with new models and ways of thinking. Because we are working with a team of experts, we can synthesize wisdom from many educational frameworks and apply best practices of universal design, TILT, and culturally appropriate teaching in our classrooms. Like our students, this collaboration becomes part of addressing economic precarity for educational professionals. By supporting economic justice, the work of educational and social justice can be sustained.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Kimberly Puttman, Heather Blicher, and Heidi Esbensen report no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Illustrative References

Esbenson, H. (n.d.) SOC 218: Final Project Rubric.

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Open Peer Review

Batte, E. (2024, June). [Raising Our Voices, by K. Puttman, H. Blicher, & E. Esbensen]. *Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education*, 3(1), 200-219. doi: 10.31274/joerhe.17957

Reviewer: Elizabeth Batte

Recommendation: Major Revisions Required

Scope, Objectives, Content

Is the article in scope for Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education? Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics? Is the topic an important one, or is it trivial or of low priority?

I think the scope of the work can work outside of sociology and be easily applied to other fields of study.

The objective of this article is to persuade others to critically analyze open works being adapted, but I think the authors put a lot of bias into their work. I would like to see citations to go along with their critiques and analysis of current landscapes. There is truth in what they are publishing, but it needs to be proven in the writing.

The content is original with the inclusion of student works and quotes. This was one of my favorite aspects of this article. Figure 1 focuses on privilege and was adapted from work done in Canada. I would like to see the authors make note of how they modified this to be relative to the U.S. What changes did they make? Why did they make those changes? What information was used (and cited) to make those changes?

Organization

Does the article proceed logically? As applicable, does the article adhere to a recommended structure and the section guideline?

The article is well-organized and appropriate for this section.

Methodology, Approach, Conclusions

The methodology for data gathering and analysis should be appropriate for the problem addressed. Inferences from data should be sound--the author should not reach unsupported conclusions. Not all papers will use a scientific research

methodology, but all should employ sound reasoning and an adequate balance between description and critical analysis. Consider: Is the article factually accurate? Is it clear the author knows, or has investigated, previous work on the subject of the article? Has the author failed to reference recent or seminal work on the subject?

The results are described as innovative. Why? This is not the first group to work with students to critically analyze and update open resources. This is not the first group to use the lens of social justice or DEI to adapt open resources. I want proof of why they are innovative.

Writing Style, References

Please indicate whether there are problems with expression or flow, but do not comment about grammar or basic edits. Do NOT take the time to do copy editing - that will be handled later in the process. However, general comments pointing out problems with style or format are useful.

The informal writing style is fine because they are talking about personal experience. However, there are many, many, many statements made without reference to facts. These statements come off as opinions without reference, example, or citations. Major revisions need to be made in presenting these statements as facts.

Application:

Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

The authors show a good example of how to use students and a critical lens of DEI to improve open resources.

What are the stronger points/qualities of the article?

The student work and testimonies.

What are the weaker points/qualities of the article? How could they be strengthened?

The lack of references and citations. This article overall comes off as opinions not facts.

Peer Review Ranking: Scope

Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics?

Highly Relevant

Peer Review Ranking: Clarity

Clarity of expression and flow? Does the article proceed logically?

Clear

Peer Review Ranking: Contribution

Contribution to Higher Education research and/or practice

Contributes

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate?

Not Sound

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate? Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

N/A

Overall Evaluation

Major Revisions Required

Open Peer Review

Schultz, T. (2024, June). [Raising Our Voices, by K. Puttman, H. Blicher, & E. Esbensen]. *Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education*, 3(1), 200-219. doi: 10.31274/joerhe.17957

Reviewer: Teresa Schultz

Recommendation: Reject

Scope, Objectives, Content

Is the article in scope for Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education? Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics? Is the topic an important one, or is it trivial or of low priority?

The topic is about incorporating EDI into open pedagogy and open textbooks, which is definitely in the scope of the journal and, I believe, of interest to readers.

Organization

Does the article proceed logically? As applicable, does the article adhere to a recommended structure and the section guideline?

Unfortunately the organization of the paper is confusing and needs substantial work. It consists of the introduction, section 1 and then section 2. Each of the sections reads like their own mini-paper, complete with their own introduction and literature review that seem to have been written without any input from the other section or main introduction, as there are redundancies between all of them. It's also not entirely clear what the purpose of each section is. Section 1 does seem to present examples of how instructors incorporated EDI into a couple of open pedagogy assignments into one specific Sociology class, but it's unclear if this was done before the grant was obtained, after, or really how it relates to the broader topic of this large grant at all.

As for Section 2, I'm really not certain what the purpose is. There's repeating of information from the Intro and Section 1, something that reads like a more expanded literature review (although I'm unclear why this comes so late, especially definitions for open pedagogy and other concepts that were used in Section 1), and then some overall results with no mention of how these results were obtained. How and which students reported satisfaction with the material? Did an IRB approve any of this? (I don't know if one needed to, but as you're dealing with human data, it seems like the authors at least needed an IRB to rule the project exempt). Overall, Section 2 just seems to give a rehashed overview of the grant project without any details.

The authors need to read through the piece as a whole and consolidate and edit so it is cohesive and makes sense. Have one introduction and one literature review. Consider how each section transitions into the other. Provide definitions when you first introduce a concept. Provide more details, especially for the methodology of how you obtained any results.

Methodology, Approach, Conclusions

The methodology for data gathering and analysis should be appropriate for the problem addressed. Inferences from data should be sound--the author should not reach unsupported conclusions. Not all papers will use a scientific research methodology, but all should employ sound reasoning and an adequate balance between description and critical analysis. Consider: Is the article factually accurate? Is it clear the author knows, or has investigated, previous work on the subject of the article? Has the author failed to reference recent or seminal work on the subject?

The paper seems to focus on the forest at the loss of the trees--i.e., more details are needed to support their conclusions. They say they have created a system to help incorporate EDI into open education work but then provide no details as to how they actually did this. Their abstract promises a roadmap for "revolutionizing our textbooks and course builds," but then nothing is said about this process. The abstract also says "We provide tools and resources to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) primary considerations when faculty choose, adapt, and create course materials," but again, no mention of this was made in the paper.

And as stated previously, there's no methodology given at all for how they obtained what few results they do share, so I have no idea what weight, if any, to give these.

Overall, while the article promises to be a roadmap for how others can implement this work, really it's a very broad overview of the grant with the authors just reiterating that they centered EDI without saying how they did so. The authors do provide a few open pedagogy examples but from just one class, and they provide details for just one project (the infographic) about how they actually implemented and centered EDI. Examples of open pedagogy assignments can be helpful, but I would encourage the authors to at least consider adding more details about how they implemented the assignments, and preferably more examples of other assignments.

But really, I would mostly encourage the authors to give more details about the whole process, delving far more into this sentence: "The project is effective because it provides collaborative organizational infrastructure to transform teaching and learning." I think reading about how they created this collaborative infrastructure would be of much more value and interest to readers as I haven't really seen this as much in the literature. We have examples of individual assignments but not details of how to piece together something like this at scale.

Writing Style, References

Please indicate whether there are problems with expression or flow, but do not comment about grammar or basic edits. Do NOT take the time to do copy editing - that will be handled later in the process. However, general comments pointing out problems with style or format are useful.

The writing style was fine, although there were some occasional typos. Nothing major.

Application:

Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

There were some examples, but other than providing a rough overview of how they developed their one infographic, there were no details provided as to how they developed these assignments, which means there's limited application for others. Considering this paper discusses a large grant that covered many classes, it would be much more helpful to provide more details about the processes they used for multiple classes, not just one.

What are the stronger points/qualities of the article?

I definitely appreciate the focus on EDI. I think it's important to proactively think about how we can make OER and open pedagogy truly equitable, not just assume it is because it's free to everyone. There are still other barriers and ways to keep people out. Also really appreciated the image descriptions provided.

What are the weaker points/qualities of the article? How could they be strengthened?

As mentioned previously, lack of details related to how they did the work and collected data, as well as a confusing organization structure. The article promised one thing (a road map) but then did not deliver that at all. I think at this point it would likely be best if the authors started anew with the focus this time truly being on a roadmap for what they did. Create an overall outline of the article, make it clear what goes where, and then write it with those goals in mind. Or, if the authors opt to focus on the smaller, i.e. examples of open pedagogy from one class, then they need to remove the discussion of this broader grant, other than to note if the class was funded by it, and provide more details about how they developed these assignments; details that others could then try to apply to their own assignments.

Peer Review Ranking: Scope

Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics?

Relevant

Peer Review Ranking: Clarity

Clarity of expression and flow? Does the article proceed logically?

Not Clear

Peer Review Ranking: Contribution

Contribution to Higher Education research and/or practice

Does Not Contribute

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate?

Not Sound

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate? Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

N/A

Overall Evaluation

Reject
