

Episode 0: Introducing Open Knowledge Spectrums

[Theme music: "Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano" by ItsMochaJones on freesound.org]

Josie Gray: Welcome to the Open Knowledge Spectrums podcast, which explores questions of epistemic justice, or knowledge equity, in the context of open education and considers different possibilities for making open education and open educational practices more equitable.

My name is Josie Gray, and I am your host. This podcast is my final project for my Masters of Design in Inclusive Design at OCAD University.

This podcast is an interview podcast, but this first episode is going to be just me. I am going to introduce and situate myself and this project, explore some of the key concepts that guided this project, and share a few teasers about what to expect from future episodes.

[Theme music]

Josie: To start, I would like to situate myself. I am an accessible open publishing practitioner who is trying to figure out what it means to be an inclusive designer. I am interested in the balance between print and digital design from an accessibility perspective, feminist approaches to publishing, and what lies beyond providing "access" to information.

I am a white able-bodied bisexual cisgender woman in my mid-20s. I am a settler of mixed European ancestry, and my family and ancestors have lived uninvited on the lands of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island for over 150 years. I grew up on unceded Tsimshian territory on the northwest coast, around the ocean, the mountains, and beautiful rain forests. I also have ties to Treaty 6 territory, where most of my extended family lives. Growing up, I spent a lot of summers on my maternal grandparents' farm, which is on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot, Tsuu T'ina, Sioux, Metis, and Cree Peoples. Currently, I live, work, and learn on the unceded territories of the ləkʷəŋən Peoples, known today as the [Songhees](#) and [Esquimalt](#) Nations, and the territories of the [WSÁNEĆ Peoples](#). I have been an uninvited resident on these lands for over seven years. It is where I completed my undergraduate degree and where I started my work in open education for BCcampus. I am extremely grateful for the privilege I have had to live and learn in each of these places.

I am feminist, although I have only started to align myself with that term in the last few years. I am still learning, but my feminism is trans inclusive and intersectional. And when I say that, I think it's important to recognize that the term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to push back against the erasure of Black women's experiences of racial and gender discrimination in feminist and anti-racist movements and in anti-discrimination legal frameworks, which tend to focus on the most privileged of those groups, that being white women and Black men. The concept of intersectionality illustrates that people have

complex and intersecting identities that influence their experience of race, gender, and class-based discrimination. You can't look at just race or just gender.

I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of Victoria. This podcast and the accompanying website is in partial fulfillment of my Master of Design in Inclusive Design at OCAD University.

I work for BCcampus in Victoria, British Columbia, where I manage the [B.C. Open Textbook Collection](#), support OER publishing projects, and provide training and support for B.C. faculty publishing open textbooks. I have also been learning about and supporting accessibility in the context of open educational resources since 2016.

I share all of these things so explicitly because I am very aware of the many privileges I hold and the context I am working from, and I think it is important to name those things. All of these things impact how I see and interact with the world and how the world interacts with me. And they also have influenced my approach to this project in ways that I am aware of and also probably in ways that I am oblivious to.

With that, let's jump into the two big ideas that guide this project. The first is open education.

[Theme music]

Josie: The word "open" is a huge word that encompasses so many different things depending on the context. It is often used to mean public, transparent, free, and/or accessible, and it is often used to describe more equitable institutional and research processes and practices, like open access, open data, open science, open source, open government, etc. But this project focuses on open education specifically.

In education, there are again many ways openness is understood and enacted. But one common goal is to create a more inclusive and accessible education system by thinking about knowledge through this framework of openness. Instead of bundling up knowledge in an expensive textbook or putting it behind a paywall, open education sees knowledge as a public good that should be freely available to everyone to learn from, build on, and customize for their own purposes.

One example of openness in education is the replacement of traditional commercial, all rights reserved textbooks with open educational resources (OER). OER are any kind of resource used for teaching and learning—so for example, textbooks, syllabuses, videos, test banks—that are in the public domain or under an open licence (such as a Creative Commons licence), which allows others to use, edit, remix, and redistribute the content for free—all without needing to ask for permission from the original author.

In addition to OER, open education is explored through the lens of open pedagogy, or how openness shows up in teaching practices. Open pedagogy is a much harder term to define, and it's one that I am less familiar with. And it means different things to different people, and it looks different in different contexts. Open pedagogy often aims to put students in the seat of knowledge producers, rather than knowledge consumers, and make them active participants in the learning

process. If you want to explore all of the nuances of open pedagogy, I would recommend going over to the Open Pedagogy Notebook at openpedagogy.org/open-pedagogy/ and read the exploration of the complexities of the term written by Rajiv Jhangiani and Robin DeRosa.

One important thing to note is that openness on its own isn't an objective good, which I'll talk more about in a few minutes.

Epistemic Justice

Now let's talk about the next big idea of this project: epistemic justice. Epistemic justice looks at justice as it relates to knowledge. It asks things like, Whose knowledge is seen as valid and valuable? Whose stories get told? From what perspectives? Who gets to create knowledge? How are different people represented? And why?

Epistemic justice as a defined term can be credited to Miranda Fricker's 2007 book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. However, feminist and critical race scholars have been talking about justice and injustice as it relates to knowledge long before that.

For example, in *Teaching to Transgress*, published in 1994, bell hooks reflected on the emergence of the idea of "cultural diversity" in education, and how much hope there was that this framework would help bring change in an institution filled with "biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism" (p. 29). She goes on to write:

When everyone first began to speak about cultural diversity, it was exciting. For those of us on the margins (people of color, folks from working class backgrounds, gays, and lesbians, and so on) who had always felt ambivalent about our presence in institutions where knowledge was shared in ways that reinscribed colonialism and domination, it was thrilling to think that the vision of justice and democracy that was at the very heart of the civil rights movement would be realized in the academy. At last, there was the possibility of a learning community, a place where difference could be acknowledged, where we would finally all understand, accept, and affirm that our ways of knowing are forged in history and relations of power. Finally, we were all going to break through collective academic denial and acknowledge that the education most of us had received and were giving was not and is never politically neutral (p. 30).

Although hooks was not using the term "epistemic justice," she was talking about the same concept, the awareness of how the construction of what counts as "knowledge," and the depoliticization of teaching, causes harm and reifies the systems of domination in our society.

Another example is Charles W. Mills, who developed the concept of "white ignorance." This idea was first published in the late 1990s, and it looks at ignorance that is specifically driven by racism and white supremacy. Mills discusses many ways that white ignorance allows white people (although Mills acknowledges that white ignorance can affect non-white people, too) to remain oblivious to how race

functions in our society. Mills discusses how “white normativity” and then “color blindness” were constructed to allow for “the centering of the Euro and later Euro-American reference group as constitutive norm.”

The specific part of Mills work that I want to highlight is the section he dedicates to discussing how social memory is constructed and curated through things like textbooks, ceremonies, official holidays, and monuments. In particular, Mills cites researchers who demonstrate how standard American history textbooks have allowed white ignorance to be perpetuated in the school system by downplaying and “whitewashing” the realities of slavery and colonization. The erasure and suppression of this history “enables a self-representation in which differential white privilege, and the need to correct for it, does not exist” (p. 31).

Epistemic justice recognizes that knowledge is cultural, subjective, contextual, and diverse. Knowledge has power, and how we treat, share, and construct what we consider knowledge can be empowering, but it can also do harm. For open education to be a tool for justice, we must critically evaluate it through this lens.

For example, while openness can improve access to knowledge, it can also reproduce inequities found in academia and our larger society by centring Eurocentric, colonial narratives and ways of knowing. If the same people who were writing commercial textbooks are the same people writing open textbooks, we are not democratizing knowledge production. If Black, Indigenous, and students of colour, queer and trans students, poor and working-class students do not see themselves and their communities in open content, we are not creating resources that are inclusive and useful. If disabled students and students with limited access to Internet and devices cannot access and engage with open content, that content is not accessible.

We also have to consider open licences and recognize that these licenses operate in a western, colonial understanding of intellectual property that is not culturally appropriate for many Indigenous ways of knowing (Young-ing, 2006; Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2019). In addition, copyright as a legal framework has been used to dispossess and appropriate the intellectual and cultural products of Black and Indigenous peoples (Greene, 2019). As such, not all knowledge can or should be open, and there are harmful histories that need to be acknowledged.

So these questions and these issues are some of the things that this podcast aims to explore.

[Theme music]

Josie: But, why do a podcast? I mentioned at the beginning that I am a feminist, and for me, I see podcasting as well aligned with feminist praxis. Praxis is the process of taking theory and putting it into practice. So much of my understanding of podcasting and feminism developed from listening to feminist podcasters like Dr. Hannah McGregor on [Secret Feminist Agenda](#) and Sandy Hudson and Nora Loreto on [Sandy and Nora Talk Politics](#) who practice public-facing, community-engaged work outside the bounds of media and academic institutions. As such, I see feminism and podcasting as tightly connected.

For one, podcasting is one way to make academic work more accessible. When people talk, they are more likely to use everyday language. In addition, podcasting is meant to be public. I don't think you can call something a podcast if you don't share it. And it allows you to easily distribute audio content on the open web, so anyone with a device and internet can access it. With that publicness comes increased visibility and accountability for the work that you do. I also am making sure that transcripts go live at the same time as the audio to give people options in how they engage with content: You can read, you can listen, or you can do both depending on your ability, your preference, and your context.

In the open education community that I am embedded in, people do so much of their work in the open through podcasting, blogging, tweeting, and other means of public engagement, and I have learned so much from them. So I see this project as kind of following in their footsteps by designing it to live online, to be easily shared, to not (just) sit in an institutional repository, and to also pass on the tools and resources I used to create the podcast for others wanting to do similar work.

And finally, podcasting can also be a way to practice epistemic justice. It allows people to share their experiences, and their research, and their perspectives in their own voice, rather than being mediated through a researcher. And of course, podcasting is an excuse to connect with smart and interesting people while also encouraging a high degree of care and attention when engaging with their work in order to talk with them about it.

Voice, care, accessibility, and accountability are all things that I associate with feminism, and for me, podcasting is one way those things can be put into practice.

[Theme music]

Now I'll provide a brief intro to each of the episodes that will be released over the next few weeks.

In the first episode, Tadashi talks about his research on epistemic violence in grade 10 New York state world history curriculum. Tadashi looks at how white supremacy functions in this curriculum at the level of language, and how harmful that can be for student of colour. For example, his research looks at silence, or what is not talked about in curriculum, and looks at the use of passive voice, which is used both to obscure the harms of colonial actors and to remove the agency of marginalized peoples.

In this episode, I talk with Amy about projects she has led to leverage the permissions of open licenses and adapt an introduction to psychology open textbook to make it more inclusive. She shares a project that she ran with her students to customize the textbook to their local context, and also broader initiative where she leveraged open tools to crowd-source the evaluation of the textbook through the lens of diversity, representation, and inclusion.

In the next episode, I talk with Apurva and Zoe about collaborative models for open publishing. They share the work that the Rebus Community is doing to support more collaborative, open, and transparent approaches to OER creation. We discuss

some of the ethical and equity considerations that relate to open publishing, the work that goes into successful collaborations, and the power of publishing.

In the next episode, I talk with three other second year inclusive design students that are in my cohort. They share about their own major research projects and discuss various challenges and positive experiences they've had in the education system. We talk about openness, inclusion, and opportunities for doing and thinking about things differently.

In this episode, I talk with Arley and Samantha about their experiences as physically disabled instructors and where they see the potential for disability to be a positive disrupter in open education spaces and for students. We discuss the value of difference and making space for diverse bodies and minds, and the assumptions people make about who will be in a space or use a resource.

In the next episode, I talk with Dianne about a project she led to create a series of open, professional learning guides to support Indigenization in post-secondary institutions. Dianne describes the work and collaboration that went into bringing those guides to fruition. She also discusses the decision to publish these guides under an open license and how they thought through what license they wanted to apply. She also offers a critical perspective on openness in the context of Indigenous knowledges.

In this final episode, I talk with Marco about his work as an OER librarian and how he has supported faculty in creating low or no-cost materials that have specific social justice goals. He shares how his own positionality impacts the work he does in open education and offers a critical perspective on citational practices in open education scholarship.

I am so grateful for all of these guests for taking the time and speak to me about their areas of expertise and being so generous with their time and their willingness to share.

I'm really looking forward to sharing these episodes with all of you.

[Theme music]

Josie: You can learn more about this podcast at knowledgespectrums.opened.ca. On the website, you can find all episodes and transcripts, along with many other resources and information related to this project. Comments and Hypothes.is are enabled on the website, so if you have thoughts and ideas you want to share, that is a great place to post them.

You can connect with me on Twitter @josiea_g and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #OKSPodcast.

I record this podcast on the traditional and unceded territories of the ləkʷəŋən Peoples, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the territories of the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples.

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This has been Open Knowledge Spectrums. Thank you for listening.

[Music fades out]

—End of Episode—

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