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## Review of Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice

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## **Review of *Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice*, edited by C.J. Ivory and Angela Pashia**

Reviewed by Hali Black, University of Southern Mississippi

### Abstract

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**Special issue exploring the intersections between information literacy and open educational practices**

***Book Reviews* edited by Jennifer Joe**

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## **Review of *Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice*, edited by C.J. Ivory and Angela Pashia**

*Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice* takes a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to OER and provides numerous examples of the ways in which OER can be used to dismantle historically oppressive structures as well as to support and promote social justice in higher education. This title was written by a diverse set of authors from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, including both educators and open educational resources (OER) stakeholders, and edited by academic librarians. Organized into five sections and covering a wide range of topics and approaches, including both theoretical frameworks and practical applications, the book has something to offer everyone from librarians to teaching faculty to administrators, all of whom stand to learn about the benefits and importance of open pedagogy and OER.

*Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice* begins with a brief background and justification for the creation of the text. Editors Ivory and Pashia share that what began as an invited chapter evolved into a full-blown book after they refused a publishing agreement that prohibited their retention of copyright privileges. While some individuals might have been discouraged by this experience, these authors-turned-editors rose to the challenge and used the experience as an opportunity to take a closer look at OER issues. Their experience also served as a confirmation of the underlying structures of oppression that are deeply embedded in both academia and scholarly publishing. Ivory and Pashia go on to provide further context for the book by discussing social justice through a critical race theory lens, looking at both the #BlackLivesMatter movement as well as recent student-led protests that have sought to address rampant institutional racism. In looking at the ways in which white supremacy continues to dominate the higher education landscape, the editors argue that academic libraries, whether intentionally or not, support and "sustain the structures of inequality found throughout academia" through their policies and practices (p. vi). Drawing upon critical race theory, the editors discuss the need to reevaluate the guiding principles of organizing library materials including the physical layout and design of library spaces. Specifically, they cite the lack of diversity among library professionals as evidence of the ways in which whiteness continues to shape the norms and practices of academic libraries and scholarly communications. As such, Ivory and Pashia explain that despite the promise of

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OER, scholarly publishing and library practices have much work to do if they hope to combat the overlying structures of white institutional presence (WIP).

Section I, Theory and Problematizing, provides readers with a theoretical foundation and a thorough discussion of continuing issues related to OER. In chapter one, Hollich begins by acknowledging both the failures and misconceptions of OER while also addressing some of the ongoing issues stemming from the 5R definition of OER—reuse, retain, revise, remix, redistribute—even going so far as to validate reasons why people may not feel inclined to share full permission to revise and remix their original content. Hollich goes on to conceptualize the unrealized potential of OER to promote social justice and provides suggestions for improved effectiveness and success. In chapter two, Adams and Dannick critique the ways in which the structures of white supremacy permeate academia, citing the exclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, which is most notable in the Western curriculum. Adams and Dannick share how OER can provide much-needed heterogeneity to fill such gaps in curriculum content. To conclude this section, Weeks addresses the "hidden curriculum," specifically examining the implicit heteronormativity of higher education curriculum through a queer lens. He cites concern for students being unrepresented in the very texts they are assigned to study, as well as the implicit and often unconscious bias that underlies higher education teaching practices.

Section II, Open Praxis, moves beyond the previously discussed theoretical framework, focusing instead on application and practice. In chapter four, Maxwell et al. share the results of a Teach-Out model for an open course focusing on the issue of police brutality in the United States. Teach-Out models refer to free and open learning experiences that are both short in nature and usually focused on a single social issue. Such courses offer learning experiences to a global audience through free, online platforms. Chapter four offers a comprehensive review of the literature, a case study documenting the authors' Teach-Out project and experiences, and sample action plans for others who wish to create similar open learning experiences. Chapter five situates OER in the context of PreK–12 education. In this chapter, Grotewold et al. share their experiences with implementing OER education into teaching certification and educational leadership degree programs with the goal of fostering a community of current and future educators who recognize the value of OER and open pedagogy. The authors also highlight the impact of OER on PreK–12 education, citing the potential cost savings for students as well as the importance of digital equity and culturally responsive teaching practices. Chapter six examines how OER can be used to reframe social

work education. Given that a fundamental, guiding principle of social work is the empowerment of marginalized people and communities, Wood and Orzech make the convincing argument that, as such, the curriculum and materials for social work education should reflect the voices, perspectives, and viewpoints of the populations they will be working with to ensure the necessary cultural competence required of social work professionals. In chapter seven, community college librarians address the issue of equity and the ever-rising costs of textbooks and required course materials. Using culturally responsive pedagogy and critical information literacy concepts, Becknell and March describe their efforts to develop open course materials and implement OER into a credit-bearing information literacy course.

The next section, *Decolonizing Learning in the Global South*, moves into international perspectives and issues, focusing on OER development and implementation in Africa. In chapter eight, Cox et al. discuss intuitive pedagogy and share how educators in the South African higher education system have worked to implement curriculum changes to address issues of social injustice including equitable access to education and the role of open textbooks. Chapter nine delves into a qualitative research project by Chigwada that includes a thorough analysis of interviews with librarians on their involvement in archiving open textbooks in addition to interviews with students about their experiences with open texts and course materials. The study, based in sub-Saharan Africa, identifies both challenges and opportunities experienced by stakeholders to provide a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. In chapter ten, Abdu provides an overview of the state of OER in Africa through analysis of a survey of teacher educators and their experiences with OER.

Section IV, *Scaling Up with Institutional Policies (Approaches)*, investigates the impact of institutional and administrative support on faculty use and creation of OER. In chapter eleven, Doyle et al. discuss higher education's limited definition of "knowledge" in addition to other structural barriers that continue to prevent faculty from using and developing OER. More optimistically, chapter twelve presents a structural approach to increasing support for faculty adoption and development of OER, which calls for situating OER within institutional diversity and inclusion frameworks and strategic planning. Switching gears slightly, Harlow and Rood share practical solutions and suggestions, including the development of faculty training modules on the use and creation of OER in chapter thirteen.

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Building and Decolonizing OER Platforms, the fifth and final section, addresses big-picture concerns, moving beyond open textbooks to focus on strategies to develop and decolonize OER platforms and collections. Specifically, in chapter fourteen, Ramjohn discusses *Wikipedia* as a platform for open education and the efforts to decolonize its content. Chapter fifteen uses the example of creating and recording musical performances using scores in the public domain for which there are no recordings of performances of that score available in the public domain. Murphy and Terrell further explain how this recording project was used to create OER content for music theory courses, providing a much-needed real-world example of how different disciplines might approach OER development outside of the open textbook genre. Similarly, in chapter sixteen, Collins et al. provide an overview of a collaborative approach to building an OER collection to support the teaching of Caribbean studies, which emphasizes the use of "low-barrier tools to enable student-instructor co-creation" as well as "efforts to subvert colonialist legacies" (p. 285).

Overall, *Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice* offers a wide range of approaches to the use and development of OER across multiple disciplines. Providing insight and encouragement to reconsider the meaning of equitable teaching and learning as well as culturally responsive teaching practices, this text will appeal to anyone interested in OER issues and open pedagogy, including librarians, teaching faculty, centers for teaching and learning, educational leadership, and institutional administration.