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Résumé de l'article

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Are We Asking Too Much of OER? A Conversation on OER from OE Global 2023

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Abstract

This paper examines the pervasive discourse of disruption in OER literature by recounting a facilitated conversation hosted at the 2023 Open Education Global conference held in Edmonton, Alberta. This dialogue used Bacchi's "what is the problem represented to be" (WPR) approach to structure the conversation in four movements. The first movement problematized the concept of OER by discussing the educational challenges OER supposedly addresses, such as the high cost of textbooks. The second movement considered the genealogy, historical development, and philosophical underpinnings of OER. The third movement accounted for the disruptors within the OER movement, exploring what OER have disrupted and discussing if disruption is even a legitimate goal of OER. The fourth and final movement pivoted to examine resistors and forms of resistance to OER, including the protection of intellectual property rights, copyright concerns, and Marcuse's idea of repressive tolerance. This single conversation generated a small but important piece of social intelligence within a much larger dialogue about open education, open pedagogy, and OER during a time of flux (characterized by intense politicization, the relentless progression of educational technology, the intensification of marketization, and the growing popularity of all-inclusive textbooks). This social intelligence can be used to guide the next transition phase for OER development. While the conversation does not offer tidy solutions or even clear recommendations, it does suggest that the next wave of OER practitioners would always do well to focus on the goals OER can achieve, not what they hope to disrupt.

Keywords: open education resources, OER, Carol Bacchi, disruption, textbooks

The Discourse of Disruption in OER

Some experts peg the start of the open education movement to the 1997 founding of MERLOT at California State University (Bliss & Smith, 2017). Others refer to Wiley's coining of the phrase *open content* in 1998 (Wiley, 2006). Still others point to Massachusetts Institute of Technology's landmark decision in 2001 to put its entire course catalog online as the move that created a new intellectual commons and launched a new model for the dissemination of knowledge and scholarly collaboration, now called open education (Bliss & Smith, 2017). The confluence of activity at the turn of the twenty-first century was propelled by support from the Hewlett Foundation, which accelerated rapid growth and interest in open educational resources (OER), specifically targeting the production of high-quality OER in the developing world, building OER infrastructure, and "developing a world movement for OER" (Bliss & Smith, 2017, p. 14). It is impossible to comprehensively chart the development of each of these strategic pillars here, but each has seen rapid growth, evidenced by the development of OER sites, such as the World Digital Library, OpenStax, LibreTexts, and BCCampus. MERLOT, for example, now has over 40,000 curated items, and OpenStax textbooks have been used in over 38,000 classrooms, saving students over $1.2 billion USD since publishing its first textbook in 2012 (Falk, 2021). The robust establishment of a world movement for OER is perhaps best captured by the development of Open Education Global, the main venue for open education practitioners, policy builders, advocates, researchers, students, and decision-makers to discuss the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities in open education to shape its future direction (Open Education Global, n.d.).

Whenever the OER movement started, it began with a discourse of disruption, and this essay shares the details of a conversation held at OE Global 2023 on the problematization of OER designed to unpack this disruption. OE Global's 2023 conference theme, Building a Sustainable World through Open Education, recognizes that "the global community is facing crises on several fronts that point to an unsustainable future" (OE Global, 2023, para. 1). This theme suggests the present educational model is unsustainable and that OER is part of building a more sustainable future. Another way to express this theme would be to say that open education can disrupt the increasingly unsustainable and unequal model of higher education and OER can play an important role in building a new structure. Seen in this way, the 2023 OE Global conference theme is grounded in a decades-long discourse of disruption.

As early as 2007, Casserly asked, "Is OER a disruptive innovation in the education marketplace?" (p. 14). Would OER, for example, lead to the creation of OER-based virtual universities that would serve the roughly 100 million people who would otherwise be denied access to education (Casserly, 2007)? Or is OER fully compatible with traditional forms of education? Casserly's key question is, "Does making high-quality educational content freely available compete with traditional school structures and higher education?" (p. 19). Some, such as Anderson and McGreal (2012), have offered hopeful visions that OER would alleviate a gap not filled because of traditional educational constraints. OER could fill this role because the dissemination of knowledge is "expensive and often encumbered with traditional rights and responsibilities of tenure, promotion, commercialization, and mobility of faculty members" (p. 381). They argued that some higher educational institutions would be wise to follow the "low-cost, no frills" (p. 380) model as an alternative to other major service providers, and they suggested that OER was beginning to disrupt classroom and distance education models of courseware production and distribution, suggesting that there

are sufficient open educational resources available for an OER-based virtual university to offer a Bachelor of Arts in popular discipline areas (Anderson & McGreal, 2012).

It is easy to find articles suggesting that free and inexpensive course materials are changing the traditional textbook landscape in fundamental ways because they are far less expensive and can be adapted easily, and that this alone will make education more affordable, and hence more accessible. At first glance, this argument appears legitimate. Jhangiani and Jhangiani (2017) discovered that 54 percent of students in British Columbia do without at least one of their required textbooks, while 27 percent of students take fewer courses, and 17 percent drop courses because of high textbook costs. Many instructors are aware that their course textbook costs exceed $100 per course, and students with high textbook costs (over $400 per semester) are less likely to take a full load of courses (Bliss et al., 2013). The students who forego textbooks or take fewer courses are more likely to hold student loans, work more hours per week, and self-identify as a visible minority (Jhangiani & Jhangiani, 2017). The case between affordability and accessibility seems strong. But after two decades, even as faculty implementation of OER has increased, this floodgate of educational accessibility has yet to happen. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as a recent example, when many people were economically and educationally disrupted, OER adoption lagged, and this "bodes less well for the future of open educational resources" (Lederman, 2021, para. 10). Jeff Seaman observes, "We just don't know yet who benefits most from a more aggressive shift to digital: OER or the publishers" (Lederman, 2021, para. 11). The COVID-19 pandemic was a disruption that caused everyone to move online and embrace digital forms of education in ways they may have previously resisted, and the OER movement also accelerated the shift to digital curricular materials. In response, publishers shifted the traditional textbook business model to "all-inclusive" textbooks that reduce costs, increase sales, and ensure students have access to their materials on the first day of class. Textbook publishing efforts have moved to neutralize the impacts of OER on textbook sales and profits (Seaman & Seaman, 2023).

This discourse of disruption that underpins OER's capabilities is itself problematic. Is OER disruptive to the current model of higher education? Is it compatible with the current model? Or does it reinforce existing inequalities? To discuss this complicated and contradictory milieu, we submitted a conference proposal to host a conversation with fellow OER advocates and practitioners at OE Global 2023, held in Edmonton, Alberta, October 16 to 18, 2023. As OER authors and advocates for over a decade, we had actively celebrated this first-wave movement of OER as a disruptive force, and we believed the time was right to revisit the underlying assumptions and implications of this movement. A conference conversation offered the opportunity to generate social intelligence, which arises when alternative viewpoints are brought to bear on a common problem (Kadlec, 2008). Social intelligence "sees the irredeemable instability of our world as a hard fact that must be faced through concerted and often agonizing effort" (Kadlec, 2008, p. 64). We selected Carol Bacchi's "what's the problem represented to be?" (WPR) approach to face these hard facts and structure the conversation because WPR offers a lens to interrogate and reassess prevailing narratives and paradigms shaping OER's role in education.

What Is the Problem Represented to Be?

In educational policy and practice, OER has been hailed as a revolutionary tool for democratizing knowledge access, and the Hewlett Foundation set a policy direction to foster a worldwide movement to publish high-quality open educational resources in developing countries with a suitable and sustainable infrastructure. However, the uncritical acceptance of OER warrants a deeper analysis. This is where Bacchi's '"WPR approach becomes a useful tool. WPR moves from a problem-*solving* paradigm to a problem-*questioning* paradigm (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022), and this shift from solving to asking invites practitioners to scrutinize the underlying assumptions and implications of OER policies. Applying WPR to OER, the conversation sought to uncover the latent dimensions and potential challenges posed by its current framing as a disruptive pedagogy and movement.

Bacchi's WPR approach

> presumes that some problem representations benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others. It also takes the side of those who are harmed. The goal is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects. (Bacchi, 2009, p. 44)

Taking the side of those who are harmed aligned with OE Global's conference theme, but Bacchi's (2009) main point is that the way a problem is represented may play a role in constructing, reproducing, and manifesting the problems that policies set out to solve. This counterintuitive result sounds like Dr. Tony Bates (2011) when he says, "I increasingly fear that the open educational movement is being used as a way of perpetuating inequalities in education while purporting to be democratic" (para. 1). Or like Selwyn's (2014) assessment that open educational resources are celebrated as counterhegemonic because they are based on a variety of political, social, and cultural agendas that desire to reorientate the power relations in postsecondary, but in fact, "one of the more likely outcomes of the increased use of open products and practices in education is the increased exploitation of individuals" (p. 81). If OER does indeed play a role in constructing and reproducing the very problems it claims to be solving, OER practice would work at cross purposes to its philosophical goals. Bacchi's WPR approach was selected to frame the conversation because it is designed to surface these unintentional and internal contradictions.

Understanding the WPR Approach

Carol Bacchi's WPR approach (2009) is a critical policy analysis tool that emphasizes examining how problems are represented within policies. The crux of WPR lies in its inversion of traditional policy analysis; instead of asking how policy addresses problems, it asks how policy constructs problems. Bacchi (2009) argues that how a problem is framed or represented inherently shapes and limits the solutions considered. This framing often includes hidden assumptions and blind spots that can have significant implications. Government policies, especially, have a privileged role that causes them to *stick*; government versions of problems "take on lives of their own. They exist *in the real*" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 33). The WPR method is not merely an analytical tool but a lens through which the intricacies and influences embedded in policy representations can be explored and understood. WPR concentrates its focus on policy, and the surrogate for policy analyzed in this conversation is the production of high-quality open educational resources in the

developing world, building OER infrastructure, and "developing a world movement for OER" that corrects presently unsustainable practice.

The Six Questions of WPR

WPR works through six guiding questions, each delving into different aspects of problem representation:

1. **What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy?** This question initiates the inquiry into how the policy context defines the problem.

2. **What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?** Here, the focus is on uncovering the underlying beliefs and assumptions that inform the problem representation.

3. **How has this representation come about?** This question encourages an exploration of the historical, cultural, and social contexts that have shaped the problem representation.

4. **What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?** Where are the silences? Can the problem be conceptualized differently? This critical inquiry looks for what is not addressed or questioned within the problem representation.

5. **What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?** It examines the intended and unintended consequences of the problem representation.

6. **How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated, and defended?** How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced? The final question probes into the dissemination and defence mechanisms of the problem representation and explores avenues for its challenge or change (Bacchi, 2009, p. xii).

Problematizing OER through WPR

Applying the WPR framework to OER, we can critically analyze its current representation and implications. A worked WPR example for OER might look like this:

1. **Representation of OER:** OER is predominantly represented as a solution to educational resource inequality, aiming to provide universal access to quality educational materials. As Anderson and McGreal (2012) suggest, OER could be used to disrupt the expensive, faculty-dependent, bricks-and-mortar educational model with a cheaper, no-frills model.

2. **Underlying assumptions:** This representation presupposes universal Internet access and technological literacy. It assumes that OER, often developed in affluent, Western contexts, is universally applicable and pedagogically effective across different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, or that it would be easy to remix Western content into non-Western learning environments. It assumes that the development of OER alone can create greater access to education.

3. **Historical context:** The rise of the Internet and digital technologies have facilitated the development and distribution of OER, influenced by ideologies promoting open access and knowledge sharing. OER arose in the same era as Christensen's work on disruptive innovation (Bower & Christensen, 1995) that suggested smaller entities could successfully challenge well-established businesses such as textbook publishers, as well as the hopeful aspirations of open-source technology. Neither disruptive innovation or open source technology have come to have the impact originally envisioned.

4. **Unaddressed issues and silences:** The OER narrative often overlooks the cultural relevance of content, the need for local language translations, and the pedagogical adaptability to diverse learning environments. It also underplays the significance of teacher training and support in effectively using OER. The exclusive focus of OER as textbooks has also displaced the original vision of modularized open courseware.

5. **Consequences of this representation:** While aiming to democratize education, this representation could inadvertently perpetuate colonialism where Western pedagogical models and content dominate. It may also lead to an overreliance on digital resources, neglecting traditional and context-specific teaching methods.

6. **Production and challenge of this representation:** The promotion and adoption of OER have been largely driven by educational institutions, international organizations, some governments, and technology companies. There is room to question this representation by emphasizing context-specific educational needs, promoting local content creation, and addressing infrastructural disparities.

This brief application of Bacchi's WPR approach to OER reveals both its potentially disruptive impact and the limitations that could, in effect, reinforce the currently unsustainable model of higher education provision.

Using Bacchi's WPR approach and the analysis above, we invited individuals to participate in a structured conversation at OE Global 2023. A conference conversation aligns with the WPR approach because WPR employs a form of social constructivism by directing attention to the way participants make sense of the world as active participants in the creation and production of the policy problems and solutions in which they are involved as agents (Bacchi, 2009).

The Conversation

Ten OER practitioners and leaders participated in an hour-long conversation that consolidated WPR's six questions into four movements. In planning the facilitation, the authors used the word *movement* in a musical sense: a movement is a self-contained part that could be listened to individually but makes the most sense within the whole. The four movements organized the topics in a sequence that enabled us to pull out contrasts and continuations about how practitioners represent the problem in their daily lives, what problems they are presently working to solve, and what assumptions guide their daily practice. An

important element of the WPR method is genealogy, so it was important to include a movement on the origin of open education and OER. After two decades, OER practitioners have created a new future envisioned at the start of the OER movement, but this desired future has faced anticipated and unanticipated forms of resistance. The four movements of the conversation were also contrived to account for Bacchi's main questions at the same time that they accounted for the present, the past, and progress and resistance to the future of OER practice. The conversation is recounted like a dialogue, in the words of the participants as transcribed.

First Movement—Present: What Problems Is OER Trying to Solve in Your Educational Context?

"Relevance. Most of the time, faculty only use pieces of textbooks, but students need to purchase the whole book. An OER can be purpose built for a course or a learning module within a course."

"Faculty feel like they have to have a textbook and they have to assign readings, but students may not need to do the readings to pass or even to get a good grade. I think relevant OER can be used more effectively than textbooks often are."

"For me, it's to reduce cost. There are so many things we can't control. We can't control housing, tuition, food, but we can control textbooks. OER textbooks or freely available learning resources are a malleable barrier in a world of fixed ones."

"But it's more than just cost."

"Yes, agreed, but even if it only solved the cost problem, that would be worth it."

"In our context, some of our best OER development and implementation is with extension studies. OER help create a more informed workforce when they are used in the workplace. They learn the content of the OER in the micro-credential and then take that learning and the text with them."

"I'm still inspired by the efficiency that can be gained in remixing and adapting so that people don't need to start from zero. OER can be built by a community of practitioners. I like that co-creation and the idea of building upon something someone has already done."

"OER aligns with the spirit of public service and good governance. We continually hear about the dual government priorities of access and affordability, and our current government has expressed a commitment to OER, backed with real investment. It makes sense for us to align our efforts and capitalize on this commitment."

The conversation then shifted naturally from the problems OER sought to solve to the problems OER development has generated.

"We need ongoing investment because there's a cost to sustaining the resource. Faculty adopted a psychology textbook that now needs to be updated. I still think the cost of adopting and implementing OER has yet to be fully institutionalized."

"As a librarian and champion of OER, the proliferation of OER has been awesome. It's great that some have taken resources and done what was intended, adapting and remixing. But now there is a growing problem with bibliographic control, tracking versioning history. Discoverability remains difficult, and it may have even gotten harder. Being open and customizable is a great trait, but we now have fifty adaptations of some OER. This causes a challenge for authority. There's a tension if you want to find, track, and control so you can match faculty with the latest or most local resource."

Second Movement—Past: How Have OER's Historical and Philosophical Origins Shaped the Current Understanding?

"The whole open pedagogy movement started with open courseware. The promise, the excitement, the hope was that you don't have to apply to go to MIT. Then there was Coursera and EdX, which were free, and then all of a sudden in 2012, all of the attention moved to open textbooks. The trajectory now is moving back to ancillary resources, tests, and open courseware, but that's where it started."

"When did publishers start to offer ancillaries and all-inclusives?"

"I don't know, but I do know we're always playing market catch-up. We need to lessen the burden to faculty because the publishers are outcompeting us there."

"You know, I'd argue that the open education movement didn't start as an affordability issue. It started with open-source software, and that's the philosophical connection with the open education movement. We should do what people were doing with open software with learning objects and resources. Someone created this cool thing; I want to build on that. I can edit their stuff, and I want to make it better. Affordability came later. Affordability became the bait. But now affordability has become the only goal. Textbooks have also become a whole, rather than these little modular pieces."

"I agree. The pedagogical case got lost and is now coming back. Workload is an honest issue. Development, remixing, adaptation, updating—all that takes time."

"Why are faculty lone-wolfing it? Because it is hard to collaborate, and I think a lot of faculty see themselves as independent operators."

"I don't want to call academic freedom a barrier, but we cannot tell them what to use, and I don't want to tell them what to use. Faculty should have the right to choose their materials. But is it academic freedom to assign a $400 textbook that an instructor uses in pedagogically questionable ways, or doesn't use at all? When students don't need to buy the textbook to get an A? I think academic freedom was supposed to mean more than that."

Third Movement—Future Progress: What Are OER and Open Pedagogy Trying to Disrupt? Have They Been Successful?

"An area where OER has been successful is in representation. OER solves representation in textbooks by providing different voices and points of view, and that is a disruption that OER can still bring."

“I think it has also disrupted academic publishing by reducing the barrier to entry. You don’t need to have published a lot of things before you can create an OER. You can be a young scholar who creates a dynamite resource that lots of people adopt and use. It’s an alternative form for getting your work and your thoughts out there.”

“Indigenization is local, and OER can be more authentic and more local in its decolonization efforts. Textbooks on Indigenous history, as good as they are, may or may not reflect local peoples, experiences, traditions, or ways of knowing.”

“And let’s face it, OER did force publishers to adapt their business models. We did disrupt how they were doing business.”

“But as long as OER are textbooks, we are going to constantly be working in response mode to what publishers are doing. We’re following the publishers. To be successful disruptors, we need to jump ahead of them. I think we are coming out of a period where OER and open education lost its oomph. We have hit a status quo. What is it that we need to do now?”

“We need to continue to disrupt. We need to empower the innovators through funding and policy. We need to get back to asking the question, ‘What are we trying to do here?’”

“Open education got lost in a melee of bigger issues—COVID, police brutality, et cetera. I feel more reinvigorated. There is a public good here that needs to be reaffirmed. It’s not just about cost—it is about who is education for, and what should we be doing. It’s about the moral element.”

“Why don’t we look to see where education should be going instead of looking over our shoulders at what the publishers are doing?”

“OER is not disrupting pedagogy. Selecting a low-cost or free OER to replace an expensive textbook to build and offer final exams is not disrupting anything. We need to move from building materials to changing practice. That’s the big disruption that hasn’t happened. I’m not sure anything has really been disrupted.”

Movement Four—Future Resistance: Who Are the Main Resistors of OER? Why and How Do They Resist?

“Resistors are everywhere—other faculty who still think OER mean poor quality, deans that don’t support faculty creation, and the CFO who asks what’s the return on investment of OER development.”

“To make progress, we need to consider, ‘What is the sustainable development goal you are trying to achieve?’ It is not for someone else to figure out. It is for us to figure out. Equity, access, affordability, inclusion—you will find all these words in any postsecondary strategy. Same with disability access framework and Indigenization. OER is connected to all of these, and all these movements face their own individual sets of resistors. The most effective form of resistance I think is a system that just doesn’t give enough time for us to achieve our mission in the best possible way.”

Concluding Discussion

As we reflected on this facilitated conversation using the WPR approach, we recognized in the conversation Bacchi's (2009) assertion that policy sometimes creates the very problems it seeks to solve. Government investment in OER, for example, creates the need for ongoing (and perhaps increased) government investment in OER to develop new resources and maintain existing ones. Capitalizing on government commitment to support OER also means individuals consciously or unconsciously accept the way government perceives the problem of access and affordability (and the funders' conception of education as a private or public good). The emphasis on facilitating access by reducing textbook costs in higher education risks becoming one-dimensional, failing to address the multifaceted educational funding model. If faculty take OER and remix and adapt it, the proliferation of OER may create an environment where discoverability becomes an even more intensive challenge. To lessen the adoption burden to faculty (a cost of time, energy, and effort), other individuals will need to match interested faculty to appropriate OER, and this infrastructure has a cost. As Bates (2011) observes, "We don't expect teachers or university lecturers to work for nothing, so we immediately have a tension between the ideal and the reality of public education. There are costs in the system, and they have to be paid for, one way or another" (para. 9). If OER is primarily about cheaper textbooks and open courseware, the problem becomes competing with textbook publishers, which (according to participants in the conversation) causes OER practitioners to shift their focus from the philosophical foundation of OER, and postsecondary institutions may not be equipped to compete with these providers. The genealogy of OER's origins and its present practice highlights how subtly (but quickly) the problem-to-be-solved can shift.

Questions also arise about whether access to postsecondary education has genuinely changed as a result of OER, or if OER has led to improved learning outcomes, a challenging aspect to quantify in any situation. The paradoxical situation of OER policy creating the very problems it sets out to solve underscores the necessity of a more holistic approach in OER policy and practice. In reflecting upon the dialogue from the four movements at the OE Global 2023 conference, it becomes evident that the landscape of OER is both dynamic and complex. The first movement of the conversation illuminated the various aspirations within educational contexts, highlighting the need for OER to address issues beyond cost, such as relevance, voice and representation, adaptability, and using texts in pedagogically meaningful ways. It also revealed that there are many reasons why individuals might embrace OER, and not all of them are cost or problem oriented. The second movement delved into OER's historical and philosophical roots, underscoring the nuanced shift from open access to an emphasis on affordability, yet reminding us of the need to revisit and realign with the other foundational values of open education, such as trust, community, creativity, and pedagogical innovation.

In the third movement, the conversation critically assessed the extent of OER's disruption in the educational sphere, questioning whether OER has genuinely transformed educational practices or merely altered the surface. OER adoption has only partially created the future it imagined, in part, because the final movement highlighted the various forms of OER resistance, illustrating the nuanced landscape of opposition that OER proponents must navigate, depending on what a particular OER is for. This last movement of the dialogue, especially, could have gone on much longer and will transcend the time restrictions of a single conference session. Taken together, these dialogues underscore the necessity of a holistic dialogue to OER policy development and implementation that is cognizant of the multifaceted

nature of education reform. Much more could be done with Bacchi's WPR approach to analyze existing OER policies at national, provincial, and institutional levels.

The conversation affirms the need to resist the dilution of OER's ethos, where *'openness*' is narrowly redefined as *'free*' or *'online*,' a deviation from its original, more liberating vision. As Weller (2014) writes,

> They [open education advocates] are despondent about the reinterpretation of openness to mean "free" or "online" without some of the reuse liberties they had envisaged. Concerns are expressed about the commercial interests that are now using openness as a marketing tool. Doubts are raised regarding the benefits of some open models for developing nations or learners who require support. At this very moment of victory it seems that the narrative around openness is being usurped by others, and the consequences of this may not be very open at all. (p. xx)

Weller's lament resonates with Marcuse's (1969) concept of repressive tolerance, which argues that radical ideas are accepted in the marketplace as long as they do not fundamentally disrupt established norms and power structures. Marcuse (1969) observed that "freedom of speech and assembly was granted even to the radical enemies of society, provided they did not make the transition from word to deed, from speech to action" (para. 8). For open education practitioners and OER advocates, repressive tolerance would suggest that the system tolerates OER and the radical message of openness as long as it does not actually disturb the system, so long as OER proliferation leaves the status quo intact, or insofar as OER can be made to serve the status quo's purpose by providing the illusion that grassroots movements can arise and create meaningful change; that "the system" is malleable and open to influence. Marcuse observed that the market had a knack for absorbing and swallowing up threats. OpenStax may be a rival to the Big Three (Cengage, McGraw-Hill, and Pearson) (Seaman & Seaman, 2023), but has OER impacted their bottom line? As of 2022, educational books generated over $8.79 billion in sales revenue in the United States alone, growing by 9.46 percent compared to 2021, the second-best year for educational sales. Overall, educational book sales have grown 25.04 percent over the past five years (Curcic, 2023). The market absorbs, swallows up, and neutralizes the impact of OER by co-opting the language of inclusive access and the pedagogical rationale of OER.

The discourse of disruption, then, allows for the appearance of competition and progress at the same time it neutralizes any real disruption to existing inequalities. Applying this to the OER movement implies that the educational superstructure may embrace OER only as long as it does not challenge or change the existing educational paradigm. If this analysis is correct, then this dynamic sets the stage for a critical discussion: the educational community must proactively shape OER's role, ensuring it is not just an accessory to buttress the current system but a tool for genuine structural transformation. This requires challenging market-driven narratives of cost and reassessing OER's impact beyond mere economic metrics and the money students save on textbooks. It may also mean accepting OER can continue to play an important role within the flawed educational structure that exists because OER is intentionally built for educational purposes, whereas publishers act self-interestedly.

This concluding discussion is neither end nor beginning. It is, after all, only one conversation with 10 committed OER practitioners at a single conference, which was itself part of a much longer, ongoing dialogue. Because of its limited scope, several pressing and emerging issues, such as student-generated and

generative-AI-produced OER, are beyond commentary in this piece. If this small conversation at OE Global suggests anything, it may indicate the need for a phase transition (Lent, 2021), a maturing dialogue that critically reassesses the role and goal of OER. At a time when 65 percent of students report going without textbooks (Nagle & Vitez, 2021), perhaps a more modest ambition for OER practitioners (one that could have a profound and lasting impact) would be striving to ensure a greater percentage of educators use their texts in pedagogically meaningful ways. This transformation alone might cause structural change.

Social movements begin by questioning the moral legitimacy of certain practices (such as student textbook costs) that temporarily destabilize existing structures. Over time, the activist group reinstitutionalizes the legitimacy of the movement with norms and practices (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007). OpenStax, Zero Textbook Cost courses, multiple academic journals dedicated to OER scholarship, and OE Global are significant accomplishments worthy of celebration that represent a new, reinstitutionalized phase of OER development and infrastructure. Textbook publishers have also adapted to this first phase of disruption. In answer to Casserly's (2007) question, the generation of high-quality content that is freely available is not disruptive in and of itself, but fully compatible with the existing structures of higher education, and certain institutions may even gain prestige through OER adoption. Accepting this reinstitutionalization of the first phase of disruption invites a more nuanced understanding of OER capabilities and limitations to emerge. A new phase for OER dialogue is needed to respond appropriately to this "ecosystem under extreme stress" (Bretag et al., 2019, p. 1838). The problem is not just expensive textbooks; the problem may also be the disruptive discourse that OER can save the world. Ending the discourse of disruption is part of a more mature phase of OER development that ensures OER becomes a true catalyst for educational transformation, embodying the spirit of openness in every aspect of learning and teaching.

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