

USING PODCAST PEDAGOGIES TO DISRUPT AND REIMAGINE THE COURSE SYLLABI AND COMMUNITY WORK

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Abstract

This article examines audio and video podcasting as a transformative pedagogical tool for social justice education, knowledge mobilization, and community engagement with a focus on the Canadian context. Using a duo-ethnographic approach, the authors reflect on their experiences as racialized professors, podcast producers, and scholar-activists to explore how podcasting disrupts traditional teaching, amplifies counternarratives, and bridges academic and community knowledge. Grounded in intersectional and activist pedagogies, the analysis identifies three key themes: podcasting as resistance to epistemic erasure, as a practice for community-building and solidarity, and as a space for modelling vulnerability as a form of strength and facilitating critical conversations for advocacy and healing purposes. The article also addresses tensions surrounding power, ethics, and academic legitimacy. It concludes by calling for greater institutional recognition for pedagogical value of podcasting, ethical frameworks to guide its use, and continued research on its transformative impact.

Keywords: podcasting, social justice education, counternarratives, oral culture, knowledge mobilization

Résumé

Cet article examine les balados audio et vidéo en tant qu'outil pédagogique transformateur pour l'éducation à la justice sociale, la mobilisation des connaissances et l'engagement communautaire, avec un intérêt particulier pour le contexte canadien. À l'aide d'une approche duo-ethnographique, les auteur[e]s réfléchissent à leurs expériences en tant que professeur[e]s racialisé[e]s, producteur[-trice]s de balados, et universitaires engagé[e]s, afin d'explorer comment la baladodiffusion perturbe les modes d'enseignement traditionnels, amplifie les contre-récits et crée des passerelles entre les savoirs universitaires et communautaires. Ancrée dans des pédagogies

intersectionnelles et militantes, l'analyse met en lumière trois thèmes principaux : la baladodiffusion comme forme de résistance à l'effacement épistémique ; comme pratique de création de communautés et de solidarité ; et comme espace permettant de modéliser la vulnérabilité en tant que force et de faciliter des conversations critiques à des fins de plaidoyer et de guérison. L'article aborde également les tensions liées au pouvoir, à l'éthique et à la légitimité scientifique. Il se conclut par un appel à une plus grande reconnaissance institutionnelle de la valeur pédagogique de la baladodiffusion, à l'élaboration de cadres éthiques pour encadrer son utilisation, ainsi qu'à la poursuite de recherches sur son impact transformateur.

Mots-clés : baladodiffusion, éducation à la justice sociale, contre-récits, culture orale, mobilisation des connaissances

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of podcasts are expansive, including technological, experiential and aural-specific meanings (Thomas et al., 2025) and in recent years podcasts have emerged as dynamic tools for knowledge mobilization, storytelling, and social transformation, particularly in K–12 and higher education spaces seeking to centre equity, accessibility, and community engagement (Waldron et al., 2025). As a growing field of scholarship and practice, podcasting holds potential to make academia more accessible by amplifying community voices and addressing unmet needs through narrative-based approaches that centre oral culture and alternative perspectives rooted in lived experiences (Llinares et al., 2018; Markman, 2012; McGarr, 2009; Vrikki & Malik, 2019). Some scholars also advocate for students to engage in creating podcasts, which creates opportunities for hands-on learning and bringing new voices into courses (Cook, 2023; Ferrer et al., 2020; Waldron et al., 2025). In response, at the intersection of community organizing, education, and media, this article explores how podcasts can serve as vehicles for healing, collective resistance, and community-building to create opportunities for reflection, empowerment, and the (re)vitalization of oral culture within higher education spaces in ways that are authentic and ethical. Guided by two central research questions, we investigate: (1) How can podcasts, particularly produced by racialized scholar-activists, disrupt the traditional teaching

and learning models in higher education? and (2) As producers of podcasts, how can podcast pedagogies be utilized as a tool for knowledge mobilization to bridge and transform academia and community work through content that is accessible and grounded in lived realities?

DISRUPTING TRADITIONAL PUBLICATION NORMS AND ACADEMIC SPACES BY CENTRING CONVERSATIONAL PEDAGOGIES

This article explores the transformative role of podcasting in higher education (McGarr, 2009; Moore, 2022) and community spaces grounded in centring oral culture and counternarratives to advance social justice praxis (hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1984; Vrikki & Malik, 2019). Methodologically, it is written with intentionality as a dialogical exchange rather than a traditional academic article. Through candid reflections, shared stories, and back-and-forth inquiry based on a series of virtual meetings that took place in early-to-mid-2025 through Zoom, we as the co-authors trace our journeys from podcast listeners and guests to producers and pedagogues, and how strategically we use audio and video podcasting as a teaching tool and a platform for learning and modelling advocacy and activism (Abawi et al., 2025; Memon et al., 2020). We embrace a conversational style to honour oral traditions

and challenge dominant academic conventions in higher education that often privilege formality over authenticity (Boud, 1985; Eizadirad & Wane, 2023). In doing so, we resist the expectation for highly structured writing, standardized citations, or rigid argumentation (Eizadirad & Campbell, 2021; McHugh, 2022). Instead, we let our voices guide the text, influenced by our identities, lived and professional experiences, and commitments to equity and social justice to better our communities as scholar activists (Memon et al., 2020).

As racialized scholars living and teaching in different provinces in Canada (British Columbia and Ontario) navigating both university and community spaces, we centre podcasting as a modern vessel for centring oral knowledge with the potential to amplify marginalized voices, disrupt normative teaching models, and foster accessibility through storytelling (Eizadirad & Wane, 2023; Ferrer et al., 2020; Llinares et al., 2018; Markman, 2012; McGarr, 2009; Perks & Thomson, 1998). Key questions that guided our conversations are italicized throughout, with subheadings reflecting broader themes emerging from our exchange. Rather than exclusively presenting findings, we also offer resonances, which refer to moments of clarity, tension, insight, and learning that emerged through conversations. We invite readers not just to analyze, but to listen to what is said, what is felt, how it is said, and what lies in between. In honouring the spirit of podcasting and oral culture, we aim to inform, but just as much to connect, heal, and mobilize (Ginwright, 2018; Haraway, 1988; Shah, 2024–present; Sharma, 2024–present). Therefore, as readers you are encouraged to reflect on what you agree with, disagree with, and what stirs emotions in you, whether positive or negative. Thinking about the “why” of such reactions is part of the spiritual journey of learning, relearning, and unlearning (Eizadirad et al., 2023; Ng-A-Fook, 2020; Shah, 2024–present; Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education, 2024–2025).

Overall, this article fills a critical gap in research on podcasts as pedagogical tools by examining how they challenge dominant academic discourses and challenge what is recog-

nized as legitimate knowledge in higher education. In the Canadian context, little scholarship has explored how community-centred and racialized professor-led podcasts can serve as counternarratives to disrupt deficit-based framings of racialized communities and disrupt the traditional course syllabi (Ng-A-Fook, 2024; Sharma, 2023; Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education, 2024–2025). This study demonstrates how podcasts act simultaneously as repositories of lived experience and as advocacy tools that destabilize traditional hierarchies of knowledge (Copeland & McGregor, 2023; Swiatek, 2018). We draw on cases from Canadian universities such as University of British Columbia and Wilfrid Laurier University, as well as the Jane and Finch community in Toronto, to examine our dual roles being both podcast guests and producers. In doing so, we reveal how podcasts can function as fluid pedagogical texts that reimagine course syllabi and advance social justice by reclaiming counternarratives and amplifying historically marginalized community voices. As a collective, this contributes to examining the interplay and bridging between podcasting, academic discourse, and social justice advocacy and activism (Abawi et al., 2025; Eizadirad et al., 2023; Smith, 2012; Swiatek, 2018; VoicEd Radio, 2025; Vrikki & Malik, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY: ACTIVISM MEETS DUO- ETHNOGRAPHY

This study is grounded in a theoretical framework informed by intersectionality and activist pedagogies, drawing on the critical works of bell hooks (1994), Audre Lorde (1984), and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1994). Intersectionality provides a lens through which we can holistically understand the overlapping and compounding effects of race, gender, class, and other social identities within community and across academic contexts. Lorde’s (1984) assertion that “there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle be-

cause we do not live single-issue lives” (p. 138) underpins our commitment to podcasting as a platform for layered and multifaceted narratives. hooks’ (1994) vision of education as the “practice of freedom” guides our use of podcasts as liberatory spaces where critical dialogue, personal storytelling, and political consciousness intersect and are cultivated. Therefore, podcasting expands beyond just a medium for communication, and becomes just as much a radical act of knowledge production and resistance to dominant narratives and institutional hierarchies that often exclude or silence marginalized or non-hegemonic voices to then broadly label it as “not legitimate” (Bruce & Lin, 2009; Eizadirad et al., 2022; Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization Coalition, 2024–present; Ferrer et al., 2020; McGarr, 2009; Ng-A-Fook, 2020–present; Shah, 2024–present).

Methodologically, we employ a duo-ethnographic approach (Sawyer & Norris, 2013), engaging in reflexive conversations as co-researchers and co-producers of knowledge. Duo-ethnography allows us to juxtapose our lived experiences as racialized scholar-activists working with and within community settings and higher education institutions. This includes our experiences with podcasts as guests as well as producers. It is important to note that rather than seeking consensus, duo-ethnography thrives on difference, contradiction, and reflexive meaning-making (Madison, 2005). Just as duo-ethnography privileges conversation as both method and text, podcasting captures dialogue and reactions in real time, documenting and archiving how ideas are shaped through interaction rather than in isolation (Madison, 2005; McHugh, 2022; Moore, 2022). Our conversations were transcribed, analyzed, and thematically coded to capture the relational, improvisational, and often uncomfortable work of curating social justice-oriented podcast episodes. This included examining details such as the preparation of guiding questions, building trust with the invited guests, navigating institutional politics, and making decisions about what can be said publicly, especially when constrained by professional roles or fear for personal safety. Producing our own podcasts (*Social Justice Chatter*

Matters, www.socialjusticechattermatters.com; *Brave Conversations Series*, <https://open.spotify.com/show/21VXvwWUEVIpYVV9Sdl8Xx>; and *Safer Communities Canada*, <https://open.spotify.com/show/7pb1zYcjknaqgnR86yNJK>) has taught us that emotional resonance and community relevance are as vital as technical quality and logistics of production. Our method, then, goes beyond just documenting conversations to examining how we strategically mobilize knowledge for advocacy, healing, and systemic change (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization Coalition, 2025; Eizadirad et al., 2022; Ginwright, 2018; Perks & Thomson, 1998; VoicEd Radio, 2025; Vrikki & Malik, 2019).

DATA SOURCES AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The primary data source for this study is the recorded Zoom conversations between the two authors, which took place between early 2025 and mid-2025, reflecting our experiences as podcast guests, producers, educators, and scholar-activists in higher education and within local community settings. These conversations were designed to be open-ended and dialogical in alignment with the duo-ethnographic methodology (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). They were guided by a shared commitment to centring oral storytelling and lived experience as valid forms of scholarly knowledge (Eizadirad & Wane, 2023). The recordings, totalling six hours, were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for clarity, with minimal editing to preserve the authenticity, rhythm, and emotions embedded in our spoken words. Following transcription, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to identify recurring ideas, tensions, and insights across the conversations. This involved an iterative process of reading, coding, and clustering emergent codes into themes that spoke to our central research questions. This analytical approach revealed multilayered pedagogical and political dimensions of podcasting. It also reinforced the value of collaborative reflection and storytelling as data, blurring the lines between researcher, participant, and co-creator.

LITERATURE REVIEW: EVOLVEMENTS OF POD- CASTS IN HIGHER EDUCA- TION IN CANADA

Our methodological approach was also informed by a scan of literature examining the impact of podcasting in higher education (Bruce & Lin, 2009; Ferrer et al., 2020; Flinn et al., 2019; Llinares et al., 2018; Markman, 2012; McGarr, 2009; Vrikki & Malik, 2019). The literature scan highlights three broad uses of podcasting: substitutional, supplementary, and creative use. Substitutional ways include recording of lectures for review, supplementary ways include deepening engagement with concepts as additional resources, and more creative applications include challenging traditional hierarchies of knowledge production (Copeland & McGregor, 2023; Ferrer et al., 2020). These creative uses, still less common in higher education, align closely with our commitment to social justice, centring counter-narratives, and amplifying community voices. They underscore how podcasting can move beyond efficiency to transformation to reshape pedagogy and knowledge mobilization in ways that written texts alone cannot (Moore, 2022; Swiatek, 2018).

Podcasts have evolved rapidly since their emergence in the early 2000s, moving from a niche medium commonly known to tech-savvy audiences to one of the most widely consumed forms of digital media globally (Markman, 2012). Today, there are thousands of podcasts available across platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts, covering an expansive range of topics that span languages, cultures, and genres. As Llinares et al. (2018) points out, “the flexibility of listening and relative lack of editorial informal scrutiny in production marks the medium as something different, more radical, and more culturally urgent than radio” (p. 2). This accessibility to oral and video content has been fuelled by the exponential growth in the use of artificial intelligence (AI), declining production costs, and the rise of streaming platforms such as YouTube that make content available on demand. Unlike traditional media, which often privileges dominant narratives, podcasts

offer an increasingly democratized space where diverse voices can be amplified, marginalized perspectives centred, and knowledge circulated more freely across geographic and social boundaries (Ferrer et al., 2020; Vrikki & Malik, 2019). This evolution has transformed podcasting pedagogies into both a cultural phenomenon and an educational resource with profound implications. We now shift to focus on the rise of podcasting pedagogies in the Canadian educational context. In Canada, this evolution has been shaped in part by initiatives like *VoicEd Radio* (<https://voiced.ca/>), spearheaded by pioneer Stephen Hurley, who launched a grassroots education podcasting network that carved out a space for educators, students, and community leaders to share insights, disrupt dominant narratives, and build solidarity across silos (VoiceEd Radio, 2025). What began as an experimental platform has become a vibrant hub for critical conversations and various podcast series, illustrating how podcasting can democratize who speaks and listens and what counts as educational knowledge (<https://voiced.ca/podcasts/>). As podcasts gained legitimacy beyond entertainment value, their role in education intensified and diversified, moving from a peripheral supplement to a central pedagogical practice.

In higher education, instructors are increasingly recognizing podcasting as a tool for delivering content and knowledge mobilization, storytelling, and amplifying lived experience (Ferrer et al., 2020; Copeland & McGregor, 2023). Many higher education institutions have podcast studios on their campus that are accessible to faculty and students. There are even “how-to guides” available as resources, such as Copeland and McGregor’s (2023) *A Guide to Academic Podcasting*. The post-COVID shift to online and hybrid learning further accelerated the trajectory toward using podcasts as relevant and supplementary texts. Popular online platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom provided a flexible and accessible way to sustain human connection, facilitate virtual meetings of various sizes, and continue to teach and learn virtually. Access to such platforms, with approval of higher education institutions, facilitated easier creation of podcasts involving recording of guest speakers and then uploading the file to

media platforms (e.g., Spotify for Creators; see <https://creators.spotify.com/>) that help turn the recording into a podcast episode without much technological expertise.

In the Canadian ecosystem for higher education, some podcasts have become very popular and are even used by instructors and practitioners as resources. We would like to highlight two of these (*FooknConversation - Talking About “Academicky” Stuff* and Dr. Vidya Shah’s *The UnLeading Project*), both led by racialized professors, as effective knowledge mobilization tools that centre storytelling and implement podcasts as sites for advocacy and activism.

Hosted by Dr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, a professor of Curriculum Studies at the University of Ottawa, *FooknConversation - Talking About “Academicky” Stuff* (available at <https://www.fooknconversation.com/>) features in-depth interviews with a diverse array of public intellectuals, educators, community activists, and artists. It explores how “academicky” ideas inform lived experiences spanning topics like curriculum theory, ethics, trauma, memory, decolonization, Indigenous sovereignty, and more. The podcast bridges scholarly thought with personal insight, offering listeners rich, reflective dialogues that humanize academic ideas (Ng-A-Fook, 2020–present). The podcast has produced 70 episodes since its launch in 2020. Dr. Ng-A-Fook is collaborating with *VoicEd Radio* to host and incorporate the podcasts into his online coursework at the University of Ottawa.

The other podcast we would like to highlight is led by Dr. Vidya Shah, an Associate Professor at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. *The UnLeading Project* aims to redefine leadership within educational systems through a critical and intersectional lens. The podcast, which spans three seasons and features five episodes each season, facilitates conversations with multiple guests as panellists having conversations that challenge traditional notions of leadership, deconstructing oppressive logics, and centring marginalized knowledge systems and worldviews. Each season is supplemented with reflection guides to facilitate deep, reflexive learning. Themes include abolitionist, community-centred, decolonial, climate justice, and disability

justice, among others (Shah, 2024–present). The series invites listeners to imagine leadership that privileges collective care over hierarchy and embraces relational accountability. Episodes can be accessed via the project website (<https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cld/unleading>).

Overall, the rise of podcasting in Canadian higher education reflects a dynamic interplay of innovative initiatives, collaborations, and cultural shifts involving the intersection of community-oriented pedagogies and accessible technology platforms. Platforms like *VoicEd Radio* provided an early platform demonstrating how grassroots podcasting could disrupt dominant educational narratives and create networks of solidarity across institutional silos. Building on this foundation, individual projects such as Dr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook’s *FooknConversation* and Dr. Vidya Shah’s *The UnLeading Project* exemplify how podcasts function as tools for accessible knowledge mobilization and critical storytelling. The reciprocal relationship and synergies between these podcasts embody how collaboration and cross-pollination have reinforced the legitimacy and impact of podcasts as scholarly media. Alongside these exemplary podcasts, our own podcasts (*Social Justice Chatter Matters*, www.socialjusticechattermatters.com; *Brave Conversations Series*, <https://open.spotify.com/show/21VXvwWUEVIpYVV9Sdl8Xx>; and *Safer Communities Canada*, <https://open.spotify.com/show/7pb1zYcjkNAggnR86yNJK>) contribute to this landscape by documenting oral culture, preserving counternarratives, and mobilizing knowledge across academic and community settings.

BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHORS WITH PODCASTING: TRANSITIONING FROM LISTENERS TO PRODUCERS

Our own journey into podcasting was influenced by the aforementioned platforms and pioneers in the Canadian context. As co-authors, we first met in 2023 at an educational conference hosted in Toronto. We connected through our in-

volvement in a national organization called the Canadian Association for Social Justice Education (CASJE; CASJE 2025; <https://casje-acejs.weebly.com/>). Manu Sharma is the founder and the elected president of this national organization and Ardavan Eizadirad was elected as the member at large: English for the same association from 2023 to 2025. The monthly meetings we had as part of the business aspect of leading the association allowed us to get to know each other better. These conversations became a catalyst for deeper collaboration and mutual exploration of podcasting as a pedagogical and activist tool.

Manu, as an educator and critical scholar, launched a podcast in 2023 called *Social Justice Chatter Matters* (<https://www.socialjusticechattermatters.com>). The series is divided into two seasons, with eight episodes per season. Each episode is approximately one hour in length. The first season focuses on South Asian scholars in Canada and the second season on academics based in India. Both seasons explore intersectional approaches to social justice work. Manu's approach to podcasting emphasizes accessibility and authenticity, where episodes are recorded via Zoom and later made available to the public via open-access channels. Through her podcast, Manu has highlighted the nuanced interplay of identity, activism, and pedagogy, demonstrating how podcasting can be a tool for documentation and transformation in education and beyond. The podcast has been shared with the participants who were interviewed and also with the students in her courses as readings and supplementary texts. A full integration of the podcast series will be added to her courses on Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning and another course, Research Methods, within the Master of Education program. Implementing the podcast episodes across different courses helps students understand how podcasting (audio- and video-based) can centre marginalized lived experiences as counterstories to expose the hidden curriculum in schooling.

Ardavan began his podcast journey as a guest on *VoicEd Radio* in early 2020. He was also a guest speaker on "Episode 42" of Dr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook's *FooknConversation* podcast

(<https://www.fooknconversation.com/podcast/episode-42-ardavan-eizadirad/>). These initial exposures inspired him to engage more deeply with the medium, particularly as part of his community-based work with the non-profit Youth Association for Academics, Athletics, and Character Education (YAAACE) in Toronto's Jane and Finch neighbourhood, and as a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Education, being the founder and co-chair of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization (EDI&I) Coalition (EDI&I Coalition, 2024–present). Ardavan has since co-produced and hosted two podcast initiatives. The first is the YAAACE's *Safer Communities Canada* podcast, launched in June 2024, which consists of nine audio and video episodes, each about one hour long, that are available on YouTube and Spotify (<https://open.spotify.com/show/7pb1zYcjknAqgnn-R86yNJK>). The podcast focuses on facilitating conversations with experts, professionals, and community members about the root causes of violence, the risk factors that perpetuate violence, and how to disrupt them to create safer, thriving communities. The episodes were recorded in-person at YAAACE headquarters in the media studio and edited and published to be open-access with the expertise of media staff.

The second podcast produced by Ardavan is the *Brave Conversations Series*, which was launched in September 2024. The podcast is supported by teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education program at Wilfrid Laurier University. Guest speakers present on specific topics related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. With their consent, the episodes are recorded and edited through Spotify for Creators and subsequently published as open-access resources. The episodes are shared with all teacher candidates, staff, and faculty members via an internal newsletter to be used as supplementary texts in classes. This initiative is ongoing, and so far nine episodes have been created, with most being about one hour long (<https://open.spotify.com/show/21VXvwWUEVIpYVV9Sdl8Xx>). These podcast initiatives reflect Ardavan's pedagogical commitment to social justice by bridging theoretical knowledge with lived realities and amplifying counternarratives that challenge

deficit narratives about minoritized identities and communities.

Together, the experiences of Manu and Ardavan illustrate the diverse ways in which podcasting can function as a pedagogical and activist tool to offer a spectrum of approaches that respond to academic and community needs (McHugh, 2022; Moore, 2022). Manu's low-tech, community-centred approach emphasizes accessibility and reflective dialogue, demonstrating how podcasts can document and transform social justice work while creating spaces for storytelling and healing. In contrast, Ardavan's engagement with professionally supported, studio-based productions, as well as involvement of teacher candidates in guiding and supporting the knowledge mobilization efforts, highlights the capacity of podcasts to amplify marginalized voices, bridge theoretical knowledge with lived experiences, and foster collaborative learning opportunities. By examining these complementary approaches, this article explores how podcasting pedagogies enable racialized professors to disrupt traditional hierarchies of knowledge in higher education and mobilize critical insights beyond institutional boundaries to cultivate relational, activist pedagogies (Eizadirad & Campbell, 2021). Therefore, podcasting is more than merely a medium for dissemination or entertainment. It is just as much a site for co-creating knowledge and enacting educational and social change.

CONVERSATIONAL REFLECTIONS ON PODCAST PEDAGOGIES

In this section we shift into a conversational style drawn from our recorded sessions, allowing the text to reflect the rhythm, spontaneity, and reflexivity of our dialogue. This highlights how knowledge emerges through formal analysis but also through lived interaction, storytelling, and back-and-forth meaning making. By integrating these conversations, we aim to preserve tone, pauses, and emphasis, which are the nuances that convey the depth of our engagement. This method models the relational and co-construct-

ed nature of knowledge production, which highlights how ideas about podcasting, pedagogy, and activism develop through collaboration and reflection. Readers are invited to witness the interplay between theory and practice and to connect these insights to their own identities and teaching practices.

Discussion Question #1

How do podcasts allow you to move beyond text-heavy syllabi to incorporate oral traditions, lived experiences, and activist narratives in higher education?

Manu

Students today gravitate toward technology-based learning and podcasts meet them where they are. When I taught at a university in the United States, I used a podcast that unpacked the myth of the American Dream. The episode, titled "If People Just Work Hard and Pull Themselves Up by the Bootstraps, They'll Succeed," featured personal accounts that exposed the structural inequities shaping socio-economic outcomes. My students connected deeply with these stories as they heard real voices instead of abstract theories. The listening experience sparked visceral reactions and deep personal reflections about their own families and communities. It was an effective pedagogy that demonstrated how podcasts invited listeners to connect content to their own lives and context of their local communities. Exposure to podcasts opened up spaces for dialogue, empathy, and critical inquiry in ways that extended far beyond reading conventional academic texts.

Ardavan

In graduate school, I remember being overwhelmed by endless readings and long papers. It made me question why academia values quantity over quality. That experience shaped how I now design courses. I intentionally disrupt traditional syllabi by ensuring that over half my materials come from historically marginalized scholars and by replacing long papers with creative knowledge-production assignments such as infographics, public service announcement

video production, and listening to selective podcast episodes. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift by normalizing technology as a tool for teaching and dialogue. Podcasting, in particular, affirms that lived experience and emotions are valid data. When used thoughtfully, it can disrupt hegemonic epistemologies that dominate higher education and facilitate new insights into complex social issues.

Discussion Question #2

What aspects of podcasting, such as storytelling, unscripted dialogue, or use of an informal tone, create a space for healing and being vulnerable?

Manu

Healing and vulnerability often arise organically in podcast conversations. I share semi-structured questions with guests in advance, but treat them as loose guides. When guests tell their stories in their own way and at their own pace, the process becomes both liberating and healing. Listening deeply and holding space for their voices builds trust and connection, not just between host and guest, but also with the listeners. The ripple effects extend beyond the recording. Listeners take the conversation into their own lives, such as discussing podcast topics at dinner tables or in classrooms. That's the power of podcasting: its accessibility, humanness, and capacity to generate empathy through voice and story.

Ardavan

I agree. In both podcasts I've co-produced, storytelling has been central. Telling one's story can be empowering as it allows people to connect their past, present, and future through reflection. But it is important to note that it can also be re-triggering depending on the subject. Healing isn't always linear. In the *Brave Conversations* series, we intentionally create unscripted dialogues. The guests present on the topic of their choice without restrictions, and we ask for consent to record the session and make it into a resource that is open-access without much editing. This authenticity builds trust. Whereas

for *Safer Communities Canada*, we provided the guests with a series of guiding questions to make them more comfortable and so they know what to expect. Of course, managing dynamics, such as when a guest gives a long response, requires sensitivity. But embracing the unpredictability of unscripted dialogue mirrors real-life conversation and makes room for genuine connection. Yet some guests also appreciate the option of being able to make edits, such as in the production of *Safer Communities Canada*, where they may want to remove something that was said. Each approach to production has its strengths and limitations.

Discussion Question #3

How do you decide what to share and what to hold back in podcasting, especially when addressing painful, political, or unpopular topics?

Ardavan

The accessibility of podcasting is its strength and risk. It's a powerful tool for expression, but it also coexists with harmful content. In countries where human rights are constantly violated, people use virtual private networks (VPNs) just to share their voices and oppressive experiences safely to avoid repercussions. Therefore, podcasting involves calculated risk-taking for activism purposes in many instances. Each person must decide what they can reveal based on their identity, location, sense of safety, and level of comfort in risk-taking. Therefore, for me, podcasting is not a destination. It's a medium for healing, reflection, and advocacy. Stories evolve as circumstances change; revisiting them can cultivate new insights. That dynamism is what makes podcasting an ongoing journey rather than a static product to consume for entertainment.

Manu

I see podcasting as a space for solidarity and alliance-building. Through the production of the *Social Justice Chatter Matters* podcast, I've witnessed people across geographies such as India, Canada, and beyond find a shared purpose through storytelling. These stories build relation-

ships, mobilize knowledge, and remain freely accessible as resources to anyone online. Despite its openness, though, there's still hesitation by some guests to fully disclose experiences, often due to concerns about professional or personal repercussions. This reveals how structural inequities continue to silence or restrict certain voices. The unsaid and the unshared also carry meaning as they reflect the boundaries we navigate in academia and society. The hope is that, over time, podcasting can help dismantle some of the systemic barriers by embracing authenticity and vulnerability in pursuit of social justice and mutual understandings.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF DUO-ETHNOGRAPHIC CONVERSATIONS

In this section we shift to a more traditional analysis of our transcribed duo-ethnographic conversations. Themes were identified through inductive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. We first familiarized ourselves with the transcripts by highlighting recurring ideas, phrases, and metaphors. Excerpts were coded into preliminary categories and later clustered into broader themes. Key codes such as *oral knowledge*, *storytelling*, *archiving*, *erasure*, *lived experience*, and *resistance* were grouped together for Theme 1, which emphasizes the importance of documenting oral culture and counternarratives. We grouped key terms around *connection*, *ripple effect*, *solidarity*, *accessibility*, and *community-building* for Theme 2, which is about how podcasts cultivate community and facilitate connections. Finally, codes related to *healing*, *bravery*, *risk-taking*, *emotional safety*, and *truth-telling* were grouped for Theme 3, which highlighted the significance of modelling vulnerability and facilitating brave conversations for advocacy and activism purposes. These codes were both lexical and interpretive, reflecting meanings embedded in lived experience. They were refined collaboratively through iterative dialogue between co-authors to mirror the relational and dialogic nature of podcasting. This reflexive process ensured that

the findings remained grounded in data and aligned with our shared interpretive stance as scholar-activists (Eizadirad et al., 2023).

Theme 1: The Importance of Documenting Oral Culture and Centring Lived Experience

Podcasting, as an archival and pedagogical practice, has emerged as a vital tool for documenting and maintaining oral culture and amplifying experiences historically excluded from dominant knowledge systems (Llinares et al., 2018; Markman, 2012; McGarr, 2009; Vrikki & Malik, 2019). This creates a database where such knowledge is available beyond time and boundaries. As Ardavan points out, "If you cut the lifeline of transmitting culture through oral traditions, you risk erasing entire worldviews. Podcasting, in some ways, responds to that erasure through intentional archiving." Manu further adds to it by pointing out that, "Podcasts are a medium to open up dialogue, inspire hope, and build connectivity among different people, especially voices of marginalized communities that might otherwise be overlooked." These reflections echo scholarship on community archives that calls for resisting epistemic erasure through accessible, participatory storytelling (Flinn et al., 2009; Perks & Thomson, 1998; Smith, 2012).

Podcasts further democratize cultural production by transforming transient conversations into enduring archives of resistance. Such practices embody Perks and Thomson's (1998) concept of *archival responsibility*, here extended into digital formats. Podcasts safeguard collective memories by rendering them searchable, shareable, and globally accessible (with access to internet, which at times can be challenging and inaccessible). As Manu puts it, "It captures a community's voice at that given time, creating a living archive that otherwise would not exist." Some critics have questioned podcasting's academic rigour by suggesting it relies too heavily on anecdotal narratives (McGarr, 2009). Yet, as Haraway (1988) reminds us, all knowledge is situated and privileging written text merely reproduces exclusionary epistemologies. Ardavan, as part of our conversations,

explains, “Podcasts are now more increasingly accepted in tenure portfolios under creative works. They’re not yet equal to a peer-reviewed article publication but they’re entering the conversation as legitimate and innovative forms of knowledge mobilization that are impactful.” This reflects Copeland and McGregor’s (2023) call for recognizing podcasts as academic outputs precisely because they democratize access and foreground inclusive, dialogical learning. By centring historically marginalized voices, podcasts disrupt traditional syllabi and extend academic discourse into public spaces in accessible formats.

Theme 2: Cultivating a Sense of Community

A second theme identified as significant was podcasting’s ability to cultivate community among hosts, guests, and listeners who extend further dialogues into their own spaces. As Manu explains as part of the conversations, “A guest shares something powerful, another guest hears it and it resonates with them, and then a listener brings it to their dinner table. That’s community impact beyond the recording.” This aligns with Markman’s (2012) notion of *parasocial intimacy*, where listeners develop personal connections with voices and stories and it contributes to cultivating relational belonging. Far from promoting passive consumption, podcasts enable active reflection and relational exchange. Ardavan explained how this reflects his experience, stating, “When I listen to podcasts, I’m not just consuming ideas. I’m engaging in a dialogue in my head. As a host, I think about extending that dialogue to listeners who need to hear they’re not alone.” Manu refers to this as a “ripple effect,” further expressing that, “The good work of podcasts has a rippling effect where the humanness of voice creates a space for healing and vulnerability.” Through these ripple effects, podcasts bridge academic theory and everyday experience by expanding who belongs in educational spaces (Vrikki & Malik, 2019). In this sense, podcasting transforms higher education from a bounded institution into an evolving ecosystem of public engagement and shared reflection and dialogues.

As Ardavan put it, “We’re taking theoretical academic concepts and translating them into practical, community-oriented conversations.”

Theme 3: Modelling Vulnerability and Brave Conversations

The third theme that emerged explores podcasting as a site for modelling vulnerability and facilitating healing in alignment with what bell hooks (1994) calls *education as the practice of freedom*. Emphasizing the importance of being able to tell your own story for empowering purposes, Manu states, “Guests tell their stories in their own way and that becomes part of the healing process. It also creates space for others to connect and reflect.” Ardavan expands on this by outlining, “Telling a story connects the past, present, and future. It’s a process of sense-making that can be therapeutic but at times also risky.” This dynamic reflects Lorde’s (1984) view of storytelling as an act of resistance and collective liberation. The informal tone of podcasts invites authentic exchange rather than performance, which fosters spaces where complex or taboo topics can surface more safely as brave conversations (Eizadirad & Campell, 2021). As Ardavan explains, reflecting on the production of the EDI&I Coalition’s *Brave Conversations Series* podcast, “We don’t provide prompts to the guests. They provide us with a topic and we are there to facilitate difficult conversations, record the talk, and turn it into an episode without much editing.” Manu points out that some guests still hold back and think about how they tell their story: “I have had guests share something during the podcast recording and later admit they held back because it didn’t feel safe to go further. That absence, referring to what is not said, also carries meaning.” Such reflections highlight that vulnerability must be accompanied by consent and agency.

Overall, both co-authors, as podcast guests and producers, emphasize that the process of production matters, particularly in terms of giving some control to the guests. It is important that guests retain control over their narratives guided by trauma-informed pedagogies (Ginwright, 2018). Ultimately, podcasting redefines

scholarly vulnerability as relational resistance by synergizing and transforming voice, silence, and dialogue into acts of healing and solidarity (Cook, 2023; Ferrer et al., 2020; McHugh, 2022; Thomas et al., 2025; Waldron et al., 2025). It models how academic work can be more human, inclusive, and transformative when it dares to listen and provide an alternative perspective on polarizing social issues.

Discussion and Implications: Reimagining the Future of Podcasting in Higher Education

The insights emerging from this duo-ethnographic study suggest that podcasting is not only an evolving medium of communication but a transformative pedagogical and community-building tool with the power to reshape and reimagine the relationship between academia and the public (Swiatek, 2018; Vrikki & Malik, 2019). As higher education institutions grapple with calls for decolonization, accessibility, and innovation, in response podcasting presents a generative and evolving space where theory and the rise of AI meet inclusive praxis. Through podcasts, lived experiences and emotions can be authentically honoured as data in ways that are therapeutic rather than exploitative. This contributes to knowledge mobilization being relational rather than transactional.

In higher education, the future of podcasting lies in its potential to disrupt traditional teaching models, challenge syllabi rooted in Eurocentric epistemologies, and engage students through hands-on, accessible, multimodal formats. When students are invited to produce their own podcast episodes as an assignment, they become knowledge producers who are engaging with practising podcasting, critical inquiry, and ethical decision making. The integration of podcasting into curriculum design, especially within programs focused on teacher education, social work, and critical media studies, can offer a more inclusive and participatory learning experience to engage with polarizing or challenging topics.

For communities, podcasting presents opportunities for amplifying grassroots voices, building coalitions, and creating counter-archives of resistance. Unlike traditional research outputs that are often locked behind paywalls or filtered through institutional gatekeeping,

podcasts can travel freely across borders, languages, and platforms as open-access content. Podcasting can further support intergenerational knowledge sharing, especially within diasporic, Indigenous communities and other marginalized communities where oral tradition is central to cultural survival and revitalization through archiving past and present histories and perspectives.

Yet the growing legitimacy of podcasting within academic and public spheres also raises important challenges. As more scholars and institutions adopt podcasts as legitimate knowledge, how can we ensure the ethical use of voice and storytelling, particularly where AI can now produce podcasts simply from prompts and using other people's voices and faces? Future studies should investigate the promises and the perils of automation. For example, how might AI streamline access for creators with disabilities or for multilingual audiences? Conversely, how might it reinforce existing biases or dilute the authenticity of voice and narrative? What does accountability look like in a public-facing medium that blurs personal and professional boundaries? These are some of the questions we need to continue to grapple with as podcasting pedagogies become more mainstream in higher education.

Finally, research could further examine podcasting as a form of healing justice, particularly within communities historically affected by trauma, displacement, and systemic violence. Podcasts can document not only oppression but also resilience, joy, and imagination. This contributes to creating new archives that are future-facing and collectively owned. In sum, podcasting offers a dynamic, accessible, and socially engaged platform that holds enormous potential for transforming how we teach, learn, and mobilize knowledge. The challenge moving forward is not whether podcasting belongs in higher education and community contexts, but how we continue to use it responsibly, relationally, and radically for positive outcomes.

CONCLUSION

At a time when initiatives and dialogues centred on equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization are experiencing political backlash and leadership shifts, the practice of vulnerability and challenging bias through counter-stories takes on heightened importance. It is essential to acknowledge the ethical and personal risks that podcast producers and participants assume in facilitating and sustaining open, honest dialogue around polarizing topics. These conversations play a critical role in raising awareness, mobilizing communities, informing the broader public, and amplifying perspectives that may not be represented in mainstream media. Thus, as a collective, podcasting emerges as a method of storytelling, but it is just as much a radical act of pedagogical disruption by challenging who is considered a knower, what constitutes knowledge, how knowledge is disseminated, and whose stories are centred in education and within community settings. The findings emphasize that podcasting offers a uniquely accessible and culturally responsive and sustaining platform that amplifies marginalized voices, connects theory to lived experiences, and fosters individual and collective empowerment. However, there are also evolving tensions and challenges related to navigating self-censorship, safety concerns, and ethical practices with the growing use and influence of AI. As podcasting further grows and gains traction in higher education and beyond, we call for deeper institutional recognition of its value, the development of ethical guidelines for its use, and further research into its long-term impact.

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