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Whose knowledge, whose voice? Power, agency and resistance in Disability

Studies for the global South

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Introduction

Meekosha (2011) maintains that research and theories about disability derive mainly from the global North. Disability Studies rarely include non-metropolitan thinkers. Even when they do, these studies tend to be seen as context specific, and the social theories which emanate from these studies are rarely referred to in research theorising disability in the North. This chapter sets out to investigate how this one way transfer of knowledge affects the way Disability Studies is conceptualised – whose experiences are incorporated within these studies, and whose are left out. Multilateral debate and dialogue between Disability Studies academics and activists in different locations around the world would help add on to the knowledge already available in the field, while keeping others informed about what is taking place in ‘similar’ situations elsewhere.

Groce et al. (2011, p. 1493) maintain that most countries depend on North derived concepts to differentiate between the ‘normal’ and those who are not. They also borrow and impose models from these locations to treat ‘the disabled’ (Grech 2011). The implication of this one way transfer of knowledge, services, professionals, policies and ideas from North to South is that Disability Studies students, academics, policy makers and activists may be ‘enabled’ but at the same time be ‘constrained’ or disabled by the global North-derived epistemology that informs perceptions, and hence their

studies, research, policies and activism. As Jamaica Kincaid (cited by Chiseri-Strater and Stone Sunstein 1997) underlines, academics writing from the periphery but immersed in western produced knowledge tend to be familiar with the lay of the land in the west. This might render them 'blind' to the fact that the theories, policies and practices they consume and promote from the global North will not always enable them to explicate and address disability in the socio-economic, cultural and political context in which they are located.

This chapter therefore sets out to address this one-way transfer of knowledge between North and South, west and the rest and to delineate which analytical issues need to be incorporated in a Disability Studies for the global South. We will be using Ghana and Malta as fluid case studies. We will be arguing that theories from the global North do not always take into consideration the fact that the causes and redress of impairment lay beyond the capacity of the nation state. At the same time we need to explore the fact that the epistemologies and enunciative codes 'borrowed' from the North help academics in the South re-interpret who they are. This chapter therefore explores the fine line that runs between location, positionality, dependency, neocolonialism, agency, and resistance in Disability Studies.

The chapter relies on postcolonial Black feminist disability theory and praxis, an approach adopted also by Parekh (2007, p. 143). This approach helps researchers and activists to explore the nuances of social, cultural, political and economic histories and the impact these have on the representation and administration of disability in the global South (Barker 2010, p. 22). The implication is that national and global mobilization can take place when disability scholars and activists recognize the multiplicity of disabled and impaired identities and orient themselves towards the politics of diversity within unity (Meekosha and Soldatic 2011) while painstakingly

growing their own methodologies and knowledge cultures to deal with the complexities at the local level (Tuhiwai Smith 1999).

Whose Knowledge?

Bloor (1991, p. 5) defines knowledge as ‘those beliefs which people confidently hold to and live by.’ These beliefs provide guidelines for framing, interpreting and constructing meaning. Feminists underline that what people assume to be absolute and universal truth is biased since knowledge tends to be created from the positionality and location of embodied actors situated differently in different social structures and locations around the world (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2008, p. 486). Knowledge is produced and varies among groups - even within groups. This therefore means that what we regard as knowledge tends to be partial and interested, never objective. Haraway (1988) in fact sustains that there are ‘knowledges’ rather than knowledge.

In the academic, political and economic world, not all knowledge is given the same value however. In these settings, Western epistemologies espoused by middle class, white, heterosexual, able bodied males tend to be given more credibility and hence is more likely to be in circulation in the global academic circuit because it tends to be perceived as universal and hence generalizable to other contexts.

From a research study conducted in 2009, Maltese Sociology students, including those attending Disability Studies courses, it was found that these tend to give more credence to knowledge produced in Western countries (Cutajar 2009). This might emanate from the fact that up to 1964 Malta formed part of the British Empire. Even though the British left Malta decades ago, the Maltese still tend to believe that knowledge, products, and services produced in Western contexts, especially the United Kingdom and the United States of America, are of a higher caliber than that produced locally.

Maltese students are a product of this culture. In fact they give more credibility to 'imported' knowledge because they perceive locally produced ones as inferior. They tend to consume 'foreign' produced knowledge while lamenting the fact that they find the knowledge too abstract and not always applicable to the local context. In the end these students become more familiar with what is taking place in English speaking Western contexts.

Disability Studies in the global South needs to tackle such a challenge. Students and academics in this location need to be reflexive about the type of knowledge they consume, produce and promote. Lengermann and Niebrugge (2008, p. 487) maintain that researchers, whether feminist, Black, postcolonial, disabled, raced and/or queer should adopt a reflexive stance at every stage of their research. Reflexivity necessitates that students and researchers found in diverse academic seats of knowledge located in different areas around the world need to examine their own history and positionality within these educational institutions and/or structures in which they are esconced and/or implicated, and try to understand how these might impact on which knowledge they choose to consume. Ghosh (1998) maintains that as students and researchers we need to examine the political praxis that promote certain forms of knowledge while undermining others. These reflexive exercises will help interrupt the circuits of control and render problematic the overwhelming dependence on knowledge deriving from limited sources. At the same time this reflexivity [A1] will enable them to push them into producing more nuanced methodologies which will enable them to understand the lived and varied experiences of persons with disabilities at the 'local' level.

Reflexivity, therefore, helps researchers interrogate how the politics of positionality and location is implicated in every decision they make in their research process. In the process, this will help them produce methods that help and enable political action.

Researchers from the global South might feel disenfranchised when they have to depend on epistemologies and methodologies created in Western contexts to explore the particular. At the same time they need to thread a fine line. The knowledge they produce in the academic world can empower local scholars while disempowering those taking part in the research. Local researchers use this particular knowledge to promote themselves in the academic world, and in so doing, help erase the agency of the actors they studied in the process of rendering the particular experiences general. To ensure that this colonization of particular knowledge does not take place, researchers need to identify and articulate the particular location from which they speak, and for whom they do so, delineating how their positionality impacted on the conclusions they arrive at, rendering the knowledge they produced partial.

Reflexivity necessitates that students and researchers found in diverse academic seats of knowledge located in different areas around the world need to examine their own history and positionality within these educational institutions and/or structures in which they are esconced and/or implicated, and how this might impact on which knowledge they choose to consume. Ghosh (1998) maintains that as students and researchers we need to examine the political praxis that promote certain forms of knowledge while undermining others. These reflexive exercises will help interrupt the circuits of control and render problematic the overwhelming dependence on knowledge deriving from limited sources. At the same time this reflexivity will enable them to push them into producing more nuanced methodologies which will enable them to understand the lived and varied experiences of persons with disabilities at the 'local' level. 'Local' research would benefit greatly if researchers are familiar with epistemologies and methodologies produced both locally and internationally. This will help them to develop a more insightful knowledge of social relations at the local, national and global level that might

give rise to inequality, while exploring how disabled persons and/or groups empower themselves and resist oppression on a macro, meso, and micro level.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) observes that it takes years to develop a local research infrastructure in any given field. At the same time Disability Studies for the South is needed so that students and activists - disabled or not - are provided with more enabling methods which promote participation, empowerment, social integration and an equitable citizenship (Hiranandani 2005). A feminist sociology of knowledge underlines how this can be done. According to Lengermann and Niebrugge (2008, p. 487) this can only take place when researchers take into consideration the experiences of various groups of actors as well as that of different individuals within groups. At the same time, researchers need to analyze how different power relations at these different levels and locations could have led to the oppression of the said group and/or individual.

The privileging of the webbed accounts of disenfranchised groups helps to bring about their empowerment (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2008, p. 487). This is not the only reason why such research is important. The knowledge garnered will also help to delineate the limitations of research deriving from more privileged academic grounds. Phoenix (2012) adds that such knowledge needs to be shared around the globe and made accessible through transnational networks of publicity and activism. Dialogue and collaboration, what Yuval-Davis (1997) refers to as transversal politics, is essential so that a political standpoint theory can be fashioned based on 'issues' rather than identities.

Research however needs to be conducted with various groups of disabled individuals to map out micro, meso and macro inequities, while at the same time underlining how different groups or individuals deal with them. Such emancipatory research does not

only help give voice to disabled persons, but it also helps them/us make informed choices. Parekh (2007, p. 157) underlines that empowerment emerges when disabled persons are allowed to make decisions based on informed choices. Knowledge is, thus, heavily implicated in enabling or disabling bodies to make informed choices, to help them participate in society, and seek integration and equality through empowerment.

Language and the educational system in ex-colonies

Educational institutions and structures in ex-colonies are almost a mirror image of those adopted by their past colonial 'masters' - in our case Britain - since Ghana and Malta were until some decades ago part of the British empire. The pedagogical medium adopted in such institutions, especially at a tertiary level, tends to be English. Language, as Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) point out, is not transparent. It is a constitutive force, promoting a particular view of reality. Their competence in this appropriated medium also means that some feel outsiders within their own educational system because of the North-derived languages that constitute the realities that they perceive and work with.

In Ghana, local languages are largely ignored in almost all official domains of society, but especially in education because it is held that English is a universal language whereas the local languages 'take you nowhere' as 'job opportunities associated with the learning of indigenous languages are not lucrative' (Adjoe 2007, p. 175). English, thus, defines the terms of understanding and constitutes the definition of experience and its organization. This understanding is transferred to local knowledges and local authors. Thus, the Linguistic Association of Ghana (LAG), during its fourth annual conference in 2013, remarked on the preference of students for reading and citing

reference works from authors outside the continent of Africa, especially from the global North. . This preference reflects in other domains of society and academic disciplines, and is not different with respect to issues concerning Disability Studies (see Ghai, 2002; Adjoe 2007)

Yet scholars and activists located in the global South find it difficult to move beyond this dependency on Western derived knowledge and enunciative modalities. This is because the texts and knowledge promoted in ex-colonies are usually imported from the global North. Locally produced texts have to compete with products deriving from the North (Karthigesu 1996) and lose out since students and academics living in ex-colonies are more likely to consume the latter.

Although English is often the pedagogical medium used in academic settings in countries which at one point in time were colonized by the United Kingdom, as in the case of Malta and Ghana, the students' linguistic competence in this language depends on their social class derivation (Cutajar 2009). Students from a working and lower middle class background find it more difficult to grasp the concepts when these are taught in English. To render these theories even more abstract, they are taught in an 'enunciative code' with which a number of students are not that comfortable (Cutajar 2009).

Thus, according to the prevailing structure into which the Southern academic and their constituencies are presently driven, only North-derived epistemologies are operated to give a sense of what is meaningful. Hence Jamaica Kincaid's (cited by Chiseri-Strater & Stone Sunstein, 1997) observation is applicable here. Kincaid's asserts that while our everyday experiences are situated in the local context, the landscape we read and learn about is based somewhere else. This results in a mismatch in our spatial gaze and personal landscape.

Knowledge and neo-colonialism

As outlined above, researchers, activists, government officials and professionals often borrow ideas, models and practices from the West when dealing with disability. Borrowing ideas cannot be faulted. There is however evidence that the tools and practices adopted are not adapted to fit the context, and they sometimes undermine more nuanced ways of dealing with disability (Grech 2011). Disability Studies in the global South has not succeeded in adapting Disability Studies to fit the various contexts in this location since the colonial educational system, curricula and policies that govern learning and its orientation adopt neo-colonial models of understanding disability and its related issues.

Neo-colonialism prevails in countries where the North is perpetually positioned as the standard against which other forms of cultural experiences can be scaled. Said (1994, p. 223) refers to it as an 'authority based elsewhere'. This authority has managed to sustain a syndrome of dependency in these locations. Mazrui (1995) blames this dependency on the colonial form of education adopted in the global South, where the knowledge transmitted, the language of instruction used, the source and extent of library holdings, the cultural background of faculty members, the curricula structures and the pedagogic requirements, rely heavily on Northern ones. Academics, policy makers, activists and practitioners in the disability field use the global North as their point of reference to adjudicate what type of progress has been attained, and what remains to be achieved to reach the global North standard. In the process, they lose sight of homegrown knowledge and practices that have evolved through the ages to deal with impairment, disease, social inclusion and integration (Miles 2007).

Ironically, Briskin and Coulter (1992) look to education to bring about change. In order to enable change to occur, Ghosh (1998) promotes an interventionist postcolonial pedagogy as a means of questioning and hence interrupting 'circuits of control' at the classroom level. Classrooms can be used to analyze and problematize structures, practices and content taken for granted at a local, national and global level. The classroom can also be used to demystify texts making universalizing claims, taking them apart, analyzing them and constructively building them up collaboratively. This space is not always provided in educational institutions where academics are positioned or position themselves as the seat of knowledge in a bid to retain power.

Students may not be aware that experiences and knowledge are embodied, partial and hence subjective, rendering all knowledge situated (Rich 2003). It is this partiality which can be used to reach out and learn about the 'Other'. The knowledge produced in the process might lead to consciousness-raising and empowerment of subordinate groups (Grewal 1996), and can lead to change at the individual, group, national and global level. This is one way to begin to break down the academic dependency syndrome which Alatas (2003, p.601) refers to as 'academic neo-colonialism'.

Re-contextualising knowledges

Disability Studies, when introduced in countries in the global South served as tools for countering local myths that explained disabilities as mystical inflictions and afflictions. They provided a means of explicating the mundane conditions under which disabilities occur through the North derived epistemologies and enunciative codes. However, these borrowed essentialised knowledges need to be re-contextualised in the local contexts to ensure that the 'borrowed' tools explicate what is happening at the local level. To be

able to do this, countries in the global South need to conduct evidence-based research before a policy deriving from the North is applied. Where financial resources are limited, this process cannot always be undertaken.

Even when undertaken, the need to emulate or live up to Northern paradigms makes us lose sight of the cultural context in which we are embedded. This is not only because academics prefer Northern paradigms, but because the sources of funding and the authorities behind such research tend to emphasize, understand or accept only Northern-derived paradigms. A case in point is the implementation of 'independent support living' in the Maltese Islands. Before this policy was adopted, an independent research was undertaken (see Spiteri Gingell 2011). This report starts by scrutinizing international policies (UN, EU) to underline what still needs to be done at the local level. In another section in this report, a number of statistical information was given on the number of disabled persons found in Malta, their disability, their level of education, their rate of employment, etc. Agencies funding such research often demand this type of data. Such data however helps to objectify its subjects, denying the validity of their lived experiences.

Statistical data makes it easier for policy makers to take certain decisions and not others. Spiteri Gingell (2011) wrote this study to promote independent living, but policy makers, too engrossed by this Western model, did not take into consideration the fact that almost "half of Maltese young people aged 25 to 34 live with their parents" (Chetcuti 2014, n.p.). The majority of Maltese young people tend to live with their family of origin until they get married. Those who do not get married do not always set up their own living arrangements.

In Ghana, a similar pattern of borrowing and implementation of concepts and policies is observable. Statistical information is increasingly preferred over real life situation

studies such as ethnographic and heuristic studies in determining valid knowledges and their use in society. The implication is that real life situations are relegated to the background as figures assume lordship in decision-making. This orientation gives rise to the equalization of diverse experiences, situations and conditions under figures, and conceals the multi-dimensional and ethical nature of the problems faced by persons with disability. The importance given to statistical data help objectify persons suffering from a disability or impairment. Figures help to sanitize and hence obliterate their actual situation. Such approaches also make it easier for disability issues to be easily converted into political issues with the citations of statistics to back baffling and dodgy claims.

Hiranandani (2005) asserts that the prevalence of certain ideas, models and inferences of disability over others means that alternative ways of defining embodied differences and dealing with them are automatically rejected in contexts where North derived knowledge percolates. These knowledges tend to obfuscate more nuanced ways of dealing with issues on a contextual and situational level. As Grech (2011) also points out, where Northern derived knowledge and practices are adopted and used without taking the socio-economic, cultural and political context into consideration, the policies, research and services which ensue, tend to be similar in outlook to those found in Northern contexts, and might not be responsive to what is needed on a local basis, resulting in new forms of colonisation.

Knowledge and identity formation

A lack of responsiveness to what is needed on a local basis arises from the disregard for local identities and the diversities that lie therein. Parekh (2007, p. 143) maintains that

'identity formations are informed by geopolitical, socio-economic, cultural or ideological discourses', where these formations are 'conflicting, competing, co-opting and intersecting, depending on locatedness and positionality'. It should be underlined at this stage that Parekh draws upon the work of key postcolonial scholars such as Spivak (Landry and Maclean, 1996), Mohanty (1984), and Grewal (1996) among others to come up with this synthesis.

Connell on the other hand speaks about social ontoformativity (Connell 2011). She also believes that Southern impaired bodies are socially embedded in geopolitical relations of power, which means that disability is caused by structural, social and attitudinal factors both internal to and external to the nation state (Meekosha and Soldatic, 2011). Meekosha and Soldatic (2011) argue that this theory helps to reconcile the politics of impairment with that of disability - two aspects to the equation which North derived epistemologies tend to keep apart.

Although the above mentioned exponents underline that there have been alliances between different disability movements within and without particular nation states, there is also competitiveness among various disabled groups and individuals on the basis of gender, age differentiated constituencies, ethnicity, type of impairment, caste and/or marital status among others, even within one given nation state. It is for this reason that the postcolonial Black feminist disability theory and praxis also adopts an intersectional approach. Hill Collins (1991), one of the first exponents of this approach, underlines that change can only occur when those standing at the intersection of hegemonic systems of oppression use this position to understand where systems of inequality come together.

Those who study social inequality in countries situated in the global North tend to blame this on structural and attitudinal factors embedded in one particular geopolitical

space. These look to the nation state to remove barriers to participation, inclusion, and representation (Meekosha and Soldatic 2011). Countries situated in the global South are however not always in a position to protect their citizens from the atrocities committed in the name of neo-liberalism and globalization.

We therefore adopt postcolonial Black feminist disability theory (Parekh 2007) because it seeks to destabilize the normalizing and homogenising impulses found in imperialist and nationalist practices and discourses in the field of Disability Studies. The validity of this theory and praxis stems from the fact that it seeks to study lived experiences, and by so doing, helps give value to collective knowledge, political engagement and the ethics of responsibility adopted by those involved in these stories.

The postcolonial Black feminist disability framework is therefore concerned with how neo-colonial or imperialist systems and operations of power conflate at the intersection of gender, race and disability in particular spaces and moments. The way disabled persons are perceived impacts on the way they position and locate themselves, which in turn affects how they are treated by others (Grech 2011). Thus, Parekh (2007, p. 144) maintains that the advantage of this framework is that it projects the idea that the self is constantly in the making, and reconstituted by multiple and intersecting identities which have an effect on the person's agency in the community, nation and the world.

While this theoretical framework analyses the politics of the body, it also sustains that the body is political (Butler 1990). The body, whether female, disabled, racialised, queer and/or postcolonial, is the object of scrutiny by policy makers and resource providers. For this reason, Parekh (2007, p. 149) maintains that bodies tend to be contested sites of denied or suppressed citizenship. The manner in which the body of disabled persons is treated through policy must therefore be a critical object of concern and scrutiny to ensure they do not become sites of denied or suppressed citizenship in

the global South. At the same time **postcolonial Black feminist disability theory** conflates positionality and situatedness with resistance and change.

In effect, this theoretical framework underlines the relevance of situatedness and locatedness even when appropriating knowledge and tools envisaged for other contexts. Since disability intersects with class, gender, nation, class, sexual orientation and religion among others, this leads to the generation of resistance and solidarity based on transversal politics (Grewal 1996). Individuals or groups undergoing oppression on one or multiple levels can understand the oppression faced by others on another level.

The social construction of 'normality'

Parekh (2007, p. 157) notes that a number of governments - ex-colonies or neo-colonized - tend to favour certain types of approaches to disease and disability when they want to attract international support and/or investment. It is these paradigms which need to be critiqued, and hence the relevance of Disability Studies within certain contexts. In the case of Malta, a country at the fringes of Europe, our policies in the economic, cultural, educational and social field have to abide with the directives which are issued by the various entities that make up the European Union. In the social field, policy makers and service providers are constantly mulling over who is 'normal', 'normalcy', 'normality', 'norm' and 'average' when it comes to designing policies and implementing them (see Wendell, 1997)

In Ghana, the scenario with economic policies, cultural, educational and the social field depend on the directives of international financial and lending institutions and other supporting agencies, and on the conditionalities of loans and grants in financing budgets. Thus, concepts are usually delineated according to the definitions outlined and

accepted by such institutions rather than by the local experiences and lived contexts of the recipients. Concepts such as the definition of 'normalcy', and the normal are 'essentialised' notions imposed by institutions, especially insurance agencies and state bureaucracies (Hiranandani 2005)

Stone (1999, p. 4) suggests that the concept of disability in the global North arose from a particular emphasis on 'urbanisation, industrialisation, the rise of the medical and rehabilitative professions, and the creation of the welfare state which differentiated between the disabled and the non-disabled'. This is not always the case in some contexts in the global South. The differentiation between the abled and the disabled in the global North sets down a basis for inequality deriving from the ability or fitness to work or not to work (Wendell, 1997). States, corporations and employers in the global South dependent on financial packages deriving from the global North tend to adopt such measures to distinguish between those who have the capacity to work, and those who do not. At the same time, this is not the paradigm which is used in different contexts to decide who is disabled or not.

Social justice in disability issues

Governments and disability activists in the global South promote human rights based policies and programmes for persons with disabilities (Groce et al. 2011, p. 1495). Soldatic (2013) feels that this approach will however not help activists, policy makers and/or scholars redress the situation beyond the means offered by the CRPD, an issue which needs to be taken into consideration in a Disability Studies for the global South. Meekosha and Soldatic (2011) observe that impairment is often caused by policies and decisions enacted beyond the borders of a given nation state in the global South. Transnational companies as well as supranational organisations with their headquarters in the global North promote the deregulation and liberalisation of the market.

Governments in the global South, in a bid to attract foreign investors or in response to structural adjustment directives foisted on them, retract social protection and state social provision to attract foreign investors (Soldatic and Biyanwila 2010). This means that people are often forced to work in abysmal working conditions which can lead to death or impairment. The nation state, the locus of redress according to CRPD, is powerless to do anything about this since it is dependent on foreign handouts from powerful countries or agencies.

When studying the experiences of disabled persons living in the global South, we cannot limit the analysis to the personal, group or systemic level. Instead, we need to go beyond the nation state to find the causes of impairment and for redress (Soldatic 2013).

Conclusion

In the previous sections we have tried to delineate what a Disability Studies for the global South should incorporate within it. We have dwelt mainly on underlining why dependence on Western knowledge does not always explicate what is happening in the South. Empowerment, argues Hill Collins, (1991, p. 230) 'involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional', and acquiring 'a way of knowing that enables individuals to grasp the relations between history and biography'.

Epistemologies deriving from the North tend to forget that a country's geopolitical position, histories, experiences and knowledges need to be taken into consideration in policies and decisions intended to empower disabled people. These also need to be taken into consideration when it comes to promoting inclusion into diverse social milieus. An interventionist postcolonial pedagogy is therefore needed to recuperate

'alternative' experiences and knowledges. Ghosh (1998) argues that in spite of these limitations, we need to continue doing research which will help us translate grass roots knowledge into meaningful concepts and actions.

As Said (1994, p. 245) postulates, the revisionist task of explaining ourselves to ourselves is facilitated by the fact that we are placed at an intersection of a system of differences (Abu-Lughod 1991, p. 140). Abu-Lughod (1991) defines scholars whose identity is shaped by their exposure to knowledge produced, published and/or disseminated abroad as caught in this intersection of difference. The inherent contradictions within enunciative positions derives from our liminal position as the global order interacts and intersects with our positions within the local social milieu. This split in the self can help generate awareness of one's positionality within the structures within which we are implicated.

Kaplan (1994, p. 143) observes that scholars can use the dialectical space emanating from these inherent contradictions within enunciative positionalities to explore the interplay between repression and resistance. New research methods and theories can develop when researchers explore situated experiences (Hill Collins 1991, p. 7; Tuhiwai Smith 1999). The revisionist or recuperative projects undertaken by subaltern subjects need to historicise and theorise the position of the present and the past in order to map action for the future.

Greenman (1996, p. 50) subscribes to the idea that when subalterns make use of Western epistemologies, methodologies and enunciative codes to explore a given context, they should be deconstructing static perceptions of the 'Otherised' group, individual or nation. Pratt (1992, p. 7) adds that in the process of depiction, idioms and tools appropriated from the colonizer are transformed, challenging Western and ableist notions of resistance and agency. These revisionist projects also help disrupt

the prevailing image that disabled persons in developing countries are victims of circumstances, which renders them passive or lacking in creativity. As Wolf (1996) underlines, when Western epistemologies and enunciative codes are disrupted or adapted in this way, these help researchers learn more about their communities of derivation while teaching the minority world about themselves.

Postcolonial feminists recommend an ethic of reciprocity when carrying out research with, for, by and from silenced individuals and groups (Lal 1996). This ethic of reciprocity can be attained when the research is undertaken with and for the benefit of the participants since its main objective is to bring change through consciousness raising among the participants themselves as well as the authorities concerned (Hastrup 1992). The knowledge created and the process through which it was created should serve as a site of resistance (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1996, p. 109).

Some academics situated in the global South are afraid that by appropriating Western epistemologies and enunciative codes they are helping in the replication and consolidation of the language of power and privilege (John 1989, p. 72). Ghosh (1998) is also afraid that by using English as our means of communication with diverse communities, we are at the same time restricting access to knowledge produced collaboratively in the field, as we have already underlined above.

However, we believe that the English language cannot be ignored in discussing and communicating knowledge. Instead, the language can be used to 'talk back' (Pennycook 1994) through the deconstruction of assumptions and by interrogating situations. Nonetheless, the study of life experiences should take into consideration the collaborative production of knowledge on disability and new conceptual models capable of developing through the interaction with the vernaculars since they are the main communicative vehicles of the majority of people in the global South.

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