Universal Notions of Development and Disability: Towards Whose Imagined Vision?

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This paper addresses the epistemological dissonance created by the growing movement to impose universal templates of disability and disability-related practices to countries in the Global South and the subsequent erasure of indigenous understandings of disability. Underlying this dissonance, we argue, are the deeply problematic beliefs in universal notions of disability and global development that are anchored to colonial frameworks of understanding and approaching human differences. We explore the presence of these colonial frameworks in three specific areas: the language of disability; understandings of personhood; and notions of inclusivity. We propose that bringing about transformation in these areas would mean using alternative indigenous strengths-based frameworks of thinking and practices that uncover and value local epistemologies, understanding the complexities of local cultural, historical, and material contexts, and resisting colonial modes of thinking that label these practices as backward.

Keywords*: Development; disability; inclusivity; community; epistemological dissonance; universals.*

Introduction

This article focuses on the epistemological dissonance between understandings of disability, inclusivity, and community in the Global North and the Global South. At the core of this dissonance, we believe, is the deeply problematic hegemonic notion of the universal understandings of disability and disability-related practices as well as universal constructions of global development or the Empire. By 'universals', we refer to the assumption which has emerged in historical as well as contemporary literature in the area of disability, that there are commonly accepted, homogenous understandings and interpretations of disability constructs as well as practices that can be applied to any context in the world, irrespective of local beliefs or practices (Bezzina, 2018; Kalyanpur, 2015; Mills & Fernando, 2014; Tribe, 2014). These understandings are often prescriptive in nature and closely anchored to templates of normativity and best practices that are used as a means to categorize, codify, and approach human differences (Campbell, 2011, 2015; Kalyanpur, 2015). Defined by scholars as 'geodisability templates' (Campbell, 2015: 69), these universals are typically introduced by

international agencies as part of the larger globalizing presence where the discourse is based 'on the universalization of the theories of human difference' (Artiles & Dyson, 2005: 40) rather than ideas and ways of thinking that are located in specific geospatial epistemologies (Artiles & Dyson, 2005; Kalyanpur, 2015; Mills & Fernando, 2014). The Empire here refers to the ideologies on disability constructs, practices, and notions of development that come from the Global North and have their basis in specific epistemologies that are deeply anchored in colonial legacies (Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015; Tribe, 2014)

We argue that hegemonic notions of the universals on disability are inextricably related to the broader discourse on universal visions of international development. At the root of this broader conception of development is the Human Development Index, where countries are rated based on several criteria, on a continuum ranging from low human development to very high human development (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2019). Progress is thus associated with the sophistication of development, a phenomenon that is very much visible in the field of disability and disability-related practices. At the far end of the continuum, are disability-related beliefs and practices that are perceived to be 'traditional', and at the other end are practices that reflect a more progressive understanding of disability such as inclusive education (Artiles & Dyson, 2005). The notion of progress embedded in practices such as rights-based advocacy, neurodiversity, or inclusive education and the movement on the continuum of the Human Development Index, is based on the assumption that there are universal and unidimensional understandings of these practices and definitions of development that countries should aspire to (Artiles & Dyson, 2005). In this article, we question these hegemonic notions of the universals in both the areas of disability and development, and their relationship to how disability, personhood, and inclusivity come to be increasingly defined in constrictive ways, as these ideas migrate to spaces in the Global South.

We wish to clarify at the outset that our intention is not to decry a universality of development that envisions, at base, education for all, quality of life, human rights, and universal healthcare. Indeed, these are extremely desirable outcomes for humanity that all nations should strive for. However, the belief in the universality of how we get there and what these structures should look like, we suggest, is contentious. We assert that the search for universals and the process through which this vision is to be achieved cannot be dissociated from the geopolitical[1] and historical contexts within which this discourse is constructed and situated. The ontological assumptions in, say, the standardization of quality of life, disability, and personhood, conform to the hegemony of the universal that is rooted in the Empire (Cohen, 2014; Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015; Tribe, 2014), and are neither benign nor apolitical. We ask, whose imagined[2] vision is being pursued within the notions of the universals here? Which epistemologies and ways of being come to be centered, and which epistemologies are erased in these notions of the universal?

We bring to this analysis our own experiences as researchers of Indian origin and former teachers in India who currently live and work in the Global North, having witnessed the transfer of disability-related ideologies, constructs and practices from the early 1980s to local settings within India. In the latter role, we underwent training in interventions and strategies that intuitively did not appear to be a good fit to local conditions, but, as often happens with local epistemologies, we knew neither how to name this dissonance nor its underlying reasons. As researchers in the Global North, our work is situated in the field of disability studies (Rao & Kalyanpur, 2015). In our journey as teachers and scholars, we have come to strongly believe that while impairment exists everywhere, constructions of disability differ by contexts and can be understood only in the specific cultural or social context within which they are situated (Barnes, Oliver & Barton, 2008; Taylor, 2008). In the sections that follow, we critique two assumptions that underlie the current universalizing discourse on disability and development. The first is the notion of universality of definitions of disability constructs and practices, such as inclusive education, and their transferability to any context irrespective of local understandings of, say, inclusivity and community. In conjunction with other scholars, we argue that the practices of universal 'norm standard setting' (Campbell, 2011, p.1455) and codifying of disability, typically inherent in the work of international agencies, are ways of imposing the colonial template of understanding human differences (Cohen, 2014; Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015; Tribe, 2014). The second is the idea of global development that underlies these universal codifications of disability and best practices.

Empire and the search for universals of disability

A growing body of literature has drawn attention to the epistemological dissonance between current understandings of disability and the constructions of human differences between the Global North and the Global South (Bezzina, 2018; Grech, 2011; Harry, 2020; Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015; Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2014). The roots of this conversation can be traced back to the 1980s and '90s when a steady stream of disability related services and practices were exported to countries in the Global South (see Baine, 1988, 1990; Kalyanpur, 1996; Price, 1994; Verma & Pershad, 1984). Spurred by the deinstitutionalization movement in the Global North and the increasing focus on inclusive education and disability advocacy, many of the practices were transplanted to the Global South with the reasoning that if they could spur change in the countries of their origin, they could do so in the Global South too (Rao, 2015). This steady movement of disability-related practices and constructs did not take into consideration the cultural, material, structural, or historical contexts of the countries that they were transplanted to (Kalyanpur, 1996; Rao, 2015). The initial focus of this early discourse was on the cultural relevance of these practices or the extent to which they were consistent with the local cultural context (Kalyanpur, 1996; Price, 1994; Verma & Pershad, 1984). As disability-related constructs, labels, and assessment practices started making their way to the Global South, scholars began to question not just the practices, but also the ideologies and assumptions underlying these practices, and most specifically the implicit belief that disability

was a universal construct (Miles, 2001; Rao, 2001; Rao, 2006). Indeed, earlier scholars in this area such as Miles (1992) challenged 'Eurocentric orthodoxy' (249) and the tendency to assume a monolithic definition of disability, drawing attention to the fact that constructions of disability can be diverse. Inherent in these constructions of disability were views of the body, intelligence, or theories of human child development that were rooted in different epistemologies (Miles, 1992; Rao, 2006). More recently, scholars from parts of the Global South have drawn attention to the problematics of using the very term 'disability' as a means to understand and uncover interpretations of human differences in other contexts (Anand, 2015). This scholarship questions the assumption that there are universal linguistic denotations to describe disability that can be used irrespective of the epistemological contexts within which these terms are situated.

Although the roots of this dissonance stretch back several decades with, for instance, the Human Development Index (HDI), which assumes a universality of the desiderata of development (Harber, 2014), the conversation has taken on a more urgent tone in recent years with the growing presence of disability as a part of the international agenda (Soldatic et al., 2018). Recent scholarship indicates that the efforts of international organizations and donor agencies to impose the use of 'geodisability templates' (Campbell, 2015, p.69) to define the constructs of disability, inclusivity and community, while well-intentioned, are deeply problematic (Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015; Maudslay, 2014; Nguyen & Mitchell, 2014; Soldatic, et al., 2018). Campbell argues that inherent within these 'geodisability templates' is the presumption of universal systems and norm setting that can 'bring renegade nation states 'into line' (69). Recent scholarship indicates that these geodisability templates of disability and related ideologies are now resulting in new and troubling dilemmas (see Maudslay, 2014; Nguyen & Mitchell, 2014; Soldatic et al., 2018), as discussed later in this article.

The movement towards increasingly prescriptive templates of disability and disability related practices is situated within the broader historical context of international development that has yielded a consensus on what constitutes development (Harber, 2014). The concept of the Human Development Index, which grades countries across a continuum of development ranging from 'developed' to 'developing' (Ajmera, 2016; Harber, 2014; Kalyanpur, 2014; Singal, Lynch & Johanssen, 2019) is rooted in the post-World War II context. The success of the Marshall Plan, also called the European Recovery Program, whereby monetary aid was diverted to support the recovery and rebuilding of Western Europe, became the impetus for similar recovery efforts in many countries in Asia and Africa that had just shed the yoke of imperialism. The assumption that these former colonies should be guided towards a model of development defined by the west, led to the creation of a network of financial and technical assistance from mostly former colonial powers to their former colonies, which was institutionalized through the United Nations in agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP (Harber, 2014; Tikly, 2014). While the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide monetary aid primarily, agencies like UNESCO and UNICEF also provide technical assistance in the form of consultants and professionals from the Global North who

introduce governments and local NGOs in the global South to policies and practices prevalent in the North to implement in the Global South. The monetary aid, the colonial history of this relationship, and the universal notion of development, act symbiotically together to further the exportation of 'universal' Northern disability ideologies and practices.

The Human Development Index (HDI) was first introduced in 1990. Although situated in western notions of economic growth, the HDI in its nascent stages, aimed to go beyond strictly economic indicators such as gross domestic product and gross national product (Stanton, 2007) and towards more expansive measures of growth, such as education, health, human rights, and access to resources (UNDP, 1990). Overtly stating that 'the purpose of development is to offer people more options' (UNDP, 1990: iii), the report's own purpose was 'neither to preach nor to recommend any particular model of development' (iii) and acknowledged that 'any well-conceived development strategy must reflect the differing perceptions of developing and developed nations' (61). Yet, countries around the world were then annually graded along a continuum of development on the basis of these predetermined social and economic indicators. Furthermore, by 2016, the HDR, subtitled 'Human Development for Everyone' emphasized 'the principle of universalism' (UNDP, 2016: iv) for outcomes, and presented 'the human development approach' as a universal structure for practices that would bring 'those lagging behind' to the same level as 'those ahead' (cover page). In conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, set by the World Bank and other international agencies, it also established the timelines for these targets to be reached. How did this notion of development get to be translated into a universal template?

The very notion of *development* inherent in the Development Index, comments Grech (2015a), is a 'power loaded term and measure that is historically contingent and not benign' (ix) with deep roots in colonialism. Further, we argue, the definition of the standards for universal development, the relationship between donor and recipients, and the idea of bringing lagging countries up to these standards, is indicative of the Empire in action within the neocolonial context of globalization. Despite the seemingly benign nature of this relationship, it replicates the civilizing mission of the colonizer, 'the white man's burden or '*la mission civilisatrice'* (Rao, 2015a)*,* except that now, the aid becomes a vehicle for the transfer of western ideologies and practices (Kalyanpur, 2014, 2015). The tendency to situate interpretations of development in the binaries of traditional vs. modernity, has become a means to rein in the differences marked by the colonial gaze on the 'other' (Fanon, 1961; Said, 1979; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). The interpretations of modernity in themselves are anchored to a certain epistemic vantage point (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012) that is closely tied to colonialism and manifests itself in the guise of the contemporary discourse on globalization, universalization, and modernization (Tikly, 2014). The dichotomy of tradition vs. modernity, transparent in the early efforts of the colonizers, is less evident in what Tlostanova & Mignolo (2012) refer to as the 'rhetoric of salvation' (20), where the contemporary construction of development has become a powerful means to erase indigenous and local epistemologies, valuing certain kinds of

knowledge and relegating others to the margin (Breidlid, 2013). This oppression is manifested in the transfer of disability-related ideologies (Grech, 2015a; Soldatic et al., 2018), where the colonial 'reframing' of disability (see Grech, 2015b: 9) and bodies deemed as the 'other', now continues through the globalization of the biomedical model and organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) that function as the arm of this model (Mills & Fernando, 2014; Tribe, 2014). WHO manuals and indices such as the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) have become the tools for the standardization and universalization of human differences (Mills & Fernando, 2014; Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015; Tribe, 2014). In the sections below, we explore the presence of the Empire in three specific areas: the language of disability, understandings of personhood, and notions of inclusivity.

Language and the epistemology of the Empire

First, the area of language itself, inherent in which are assumptions of universal epistemologies on human differences, becomes an area that begs examination. Language is at the core of the 'colonial matrix of power' (see Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012:37) and becomes a powerful vehicle for transporting ideas and ideologies from the metropole. It embodies an epistemic location that has the danger of erasing the indigenous knowledges of the native. Thus, as Tlostanova & Mignolo (2012) state, 'languages are not something human beings *have* but what human beings *are*' (61). Language becomes a powerful means to identify, codify, and categorize human differences as perceived from the colonizer's gaze. Indeed, scholars have argued and continue to argue that the colonial enframing can obscure cultural and local interpretations of human differences (Campbell, 2015; Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015). What remains unquestioned or unexamined is the unique linguistic and epistemological roots of the term disability itself. For instance, the technical distinction between 'disability' and 'impairment' espoused by the ICF is almost impossible to translate to other languages where there may be only a single term for disability (Kalyanpur, 2014). Scholars have drawn attention to the fact that the term *disability* itself is an English term with cultural, social, historical, and linguistic roots rooted in the Global North (Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015) and that even within the Global North, the locale of its origin, it has been subject to intense discussion (Rao, 2015a). The conversation has not only involved the analysis of the semantics of the term, but also resulted in the reclaiming of the term to indicate an identity (Mairs, 1986; Price, 2011). The discourse surrounding this term within the Global North, further indicates the unique epistemological roots of this term, the problems defining it even within the context of its origin, and the critical role that the English language plays in developing this epistemology. How then, we ask, can we apply such a concept to other contexts in the Global South where there may be no English equivalent to the term disability (Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015)? Why is there a rush to export the universal templates of disability when the very notion of universality in terms of how we construct human differences is being challenged repeatedly within the Global North, the context within which this term originated? What are the dangerous implications of this search

for a universal term to denote disability? We believe that the very search for a universal language to denote or describe human differences, to categorize them, and then find bodies that fit the categories by itself is reflective of the Empire. Other scholars, too, have noted that certain southern bodies that resist universal norms are being reined into a definition of universality (Meekosha, 2008; Soldatic & Biyanwila, 2006). As such, language becomes yet another tool to reconstruct the 'disabled' southern body according to the colonizer's imagined vision (Grech, 2015b).

Recent literature that focuses on the disability experience in the Global South provides refreshing insights on the dissonance that exists between the Northern constructions of disability and local interpretations. Scholars from South Asia, for instance, argue that rooted within this term 'disability', are constructions of the body, identity, and human differences, which are located within the epistemological context of the Global North. Anand (2015) elaborates on the problematics of narrating the history of disability in contexts within South Asia. She argues that there has been a tendency to use western concepts of disability to uncover disability-related history in non-western contexts, thus creating a rendition of disability history that is very similar to the context of origin. Such investigations, she states, culminate not necessarily in finding 'new concepts of disability as they hoped to find, but new categories that fit the same concept' (155-156). She gives the example of smallpox, which within the Indian context is often associated with the Goddess Sitala and viewed as demonstrating her wrath or her blessings. She notes how the western biomedical explanations of smallpox as a disease with a specific cause and intervention, cannot capture the complexity of a condition where each instance is attributed to a different cause thus necessitating a different remedy.

Similarly, language in certain regions of the Global South may not lend itself easily to binaries, such as *able/disabled*, *autistic vs. neurotypical* that one sees in English terms to denote disability, indicating the presence or absence of certain qualities. When situated in a binary as seen in the Global North, disability becomes the defining characteristic of the person, that is, one is either disabled or not. Additionally, the presence of a disability in the context of the Global North is construed as stigmatizing, suggesting that being Autistic is perceived as less desirable than being neurotypical, despite the fact that autism in this context is increasingly being viewed as an integral aspect of human diversity and identity, rather than a deficit. In contrast, the specific terms used to describe human differences in some parts of the Global South, may not necessarily have a contrasting opposing pole, and thus not describe human differences in binaries. For instance, drawing on the findings of his study conducted in rural Guatemala, Grech (2015a) describes how people with disabilities were referred to by their impairment or the 'incident that caused the impairment' (68). He goes on to note how 'a person might be described as *el lisiado* (the crippled one) or *aquel/la que le dio derrame* (the one who had a stroke)'. He observes how these were designated terms for specific disabilities, and were similar to common terms or nicknames used to describe people based on their physical attributes. Grech (2015a) states that the terms were not intended to be pejorative and nor were

they interpreted as such by people with disabilities. In other words, these descriptions were neither defining nor stigmatizing, and provided a complex non-binary approach to describing people with or without disabilities.

Further, there might be already existing terms that are a part of the local language and used in a variety of contexts to describe multiple situations. Thus, the terms might be fluid and acquire different meanings depending on who they are being used for, the context or the situation in which they are used, as well as the spaces in which they are used. In an ethnographic study of Bengali mothers in Kolkata, India, Rao (2015b) found that mothers used the colloquial term *asubidhe* (inconvenience) to describe their child's disability. This alternate term, which lacked the global connotations that come with the term 'disability', was used for various purposes including not only to describe their child's disability, but also as a means to seek accommodations for their child without fielding intrusive questions. Referring to such fluid notions of disability within certain regions of the Global South, Grech (2015a) states that a 'unified 'disability' is itself a western construct' and 'attempts at defining and containing disability are further complexified as they meet contexts that are composite and heterogeneous but also constantly in motion' (56). He argues that a 'cross-cutting category and experience called "disabled" evidently does not exist' (56). Indeed, human differences are often constructed in complex and hybrid ways that may not neatly lend themselves to the lenses of language that we deem universal, such as English. Inherent in the search for a universal language to denote human differences, is yet another imposition of colonial templates of normativity in landscapes where ambivalence in how bodies are viewed or spaces that they occupy, might be embraced.

Yet, on a practical note, this conversation about the contextual specificity of disability language appears to be on the margins as we see the proliferation of assessment tools from the Global North to identify students with disabilities in areas of the Global South (Kalyanpur, 2014, 2015). There is no doubt that the intention behind assessment emerges from the need to provide supports for children who are struggling in increasingly competitive educational systems rooted in colonial legacies. However, that argument alone is hardly justifiable when one examines the far-reaching implications of the politics of the search for universal templates regardless of contextual roots. As Motha (2014) states, while knowledge of English brings with it the opportunities for social advancement and cosmopolitanism, it has also exacerbated inequities including increasing economic disparities. Thus, the language of the Empire itself, becomes a vehicle to continue to impose the Empire's ideological stance on bodies, ways of being, ways of learning, and living that resist or refuse to conform to the norms of the Empire.

Erasure of Indigenous Constructions in Personhood, Intellect, and Human Differences

Intrinsically related to language are notions of personhood, intellect, and human differences.

Our use of language to denote human difference reflects how we perceive or construct those differences. Universal notions of development have resulted in the growing transfer of western-related concepts of disability to the Global South. While some scholars have pointed to the robustness of the international identification and classification systems for disability and functioning developed by the World Health Organization and the Washington Group (Florian et al., 2006; Singal, Lynch & Johannsen, 2019), others argue that it relies on a nosology of disease that is rooted in the medical perspective (Campbell, 2015; Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015). Inherent in these categorizations, are views of the body and ways of conceptualizing disability that are rooted in Northern epistemological contexts and in notions of normativity and categorization (Grech, 2015b) that demonstrate a clear dissonance with local constructions (LeFanu, 2015). The notion of a universal norm in terms of bodies and minds is very much apparent in the manuals (Titchkosky & Aubrecht, 2015); this, ironically, while the discourse in critical disability studies questions the constructions of the norm and examines the positions of privilege and power that underlie the definition of these norms (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). These templates privilege the Northern perspectives of human differences and overlook the nuanced interpretations of disability that prevail in the South (Grech, 2011).

Using binary constructions of the human body, intellect, and other human differences, becomes problematic in contexts where identity is complex, continually shifting, and hybrid. Current conversations on critical social justice and intersectional perspectives within the Global North, draw attention to the importance of understanding social location and the concomitant positions of oppression and privilege in order to understand the disability experience (see Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). However, before we even get to defining oppression and manifestations of ableism[3], we need to understand how personhood is constructed within regions in the Global South. What are local understandings of personhood, humanness, or competence, and how do they intersect with caste, class, an individual's place in the family, gender, and age within the growing context of globalization?

In the Global North, there has been a long and infamous legacy of using dominant notions of intelligence as a means to determine the personhood and humanity of people with disabilities (see Mukherjee, 2016). However, can we assume that understandings of intelligence and the concomitant notions of personhood are necessarily universal? Recent studies show that notions of personhood can be diverse and complex within contexts in the Global South such as India. For instance, Rao (2015b) found that Bengali mothers of children with significant disabilities offered sophisticated interpretations of notions of intelligence. To them, intelligence was the ability to figure out the complex social expectations within their social context, something that their children were more than adept at. Mehrotra and Vaidya (2013) draw particular attention to understanding the intersection of gender and disability within the context of an 'increasingly competitive society where, seemingly, only the fittest are able to survive' (163-164). Drawing on their findings of an ethnographic study that focused on interpretations of intellectual disability in Haryana, they describe how men with disabilities who do not meet the 'cultural

construction of masculinity' (154) are at risk of being socially and economically disadvantaged. They call for a need to explore the gendered experience of disability and argue that notions of 'personhood' play a crucial role in determining the opportunities to which people with disabilities have access.

Unlike the Global North, notions of personhood in parts of the Global South might be closely related to gender roles and cannot be dissociated from an individual's economic and financial circumstances. In Grech's (2015a) study in rural Guatemala, personhood for men meant getting married and working to support the family. For women, it meant getting married, engaging in household work, and supplementing their husband's earnings. The common theme integral to defining personhood is the need to work. The need to work in the context of the Global South emerges from the basic need for survival. Employment is fundamentally related to supporting the family and providing for the basic needs of the family such as shelter and food. Such themes are echoed in other studies conducted in the Global South. In their participatory research with Cambodian children using below-knee prosthetics, Husain & Sanders (2012) describe how, using a western lens of child development, they initially misinterpreted the children's statement that the prostheses precluded their ability to climb trees as alluding to play. On probing further, they realized that the children saw the limitation of being unable to climb trees and thus bring down fruit or coconuts as impacting their ability to work and contribute towards the family income. Similarly, through a qualitative study that explores the perspectives of youth with disabilities in Ghana, Singal et al. (2015) illustrate that, within the Global South, education and employment provide a means to help the individual and his or her family circumvent the dire material ramifications of poverty. This is in contrast to the Global North where employment and the capacity to work for people with disabilities is associated not just with financially supporting oneself, but is also a matter of identity. Employment, historically, was one of the key aspects of 'normalization' for people with disabilities, and being able to work was visualized as a means to provide people with disabilities access to a valued social role and a place in society (Tyree, Kendrick & Block, 2011).

Dissonance in interpretations of inclusivity and community

Ideas of inclusion and inclusivity also tend to be contextual. Inclusive education has been a movement for educational change since the early 1980s in much of the Global North, where children with disabilities were historically excluded from schools. Underlying this discourse are notions of social justice, human rights, equity, and access (Artiles, Harris-Murri & Rostenberg, 2006; Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller 2014), challenging the traditional role that schools have played in perpetuating inequalities. Inclusive education thus becomes a platform for social justice to address those inequalities (Artiles, Harris-Murri & Rostenberg, 2006). With the historic Salamanca Statement on inclusive education that was signed by 92 governments and 25 international organizations in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs

Education, inclusive education began to permeate international policy documents on education. However, the transplantation of a concept without local, historical, contextual underpinnings has brought with it some idiosyncratic interpretations.

Kamenopoulou (2018) provides insights on the quandaries created by the uncritical transportation of inclusive education to parts of the Global South. Drawing on the findings of an ethnographic study that focused on the perspectives of teachers, academics, and teacher trainers in Bogota, Colombia, Kamenopoulou (2018) elaborates on the unique ways in which inclusion is interpreted when transplanted to contexts in the Global South. Despite the growing broader interpretations of inclusive education in the Global North, within Colombia, inclusive education is closely associated with children with disabilities and special teachers. Kamenopoulou (2018) argues that these interpretations of inclusive education do not take into consideration the unique contextual aspects of Colombia. These might include post-war recovery or being prone to natural disasters that displace children and make them vulnerable, or having children who do not have access to education because they live in rural areas. The translation of inclusive education to practice in Colombia mirrors similar situations in other countries in the Global South. Similarly, a review of inclusive education in 24 Asian countries (Kalyanpur, in press) noted that every study stated that the overlay of the universal template of inclusive education in the specific Asian country, is and has been problematic, suggesting that inclusive education should be more broadly defined for the global South (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2011; Urwick & Elliott, 2011) to include the provision of all related services in a variety of settings for all levels of severity of disability, rather than the current, narrow definition of teaching students with mild disabilities within inclusive general education classrooms. There are contradictions between policy and practice. Although the discourse in the policy focuses on inclusion, in practice the beliefs reflect a biomedical model where inclusion is viewed as being conditional, and impairment is seen as located within the student.

Richard (2014) describes how inclusive education in Ladakh is interpreted as removing students from their families and placing them in a hostel or an institutional setting, which is at considerable distance from their homes. This hostel, although intended to be an 'inclusive setting', becomes a setting where families who are unable to take care of their child can 'relieve themselves of caretaking burdens' (Richard, 2014: 314). Unlike the United States, Ladakh is a country that does not have a history of institutionalization of people with disabilities. Despite the best intentions, the very efforts to transplant inclusive education in this context is spurring the growth of institutional settings. Similar idiosyncratic interpretations of inclusive education have developed in other parts of the Global South. Kalyanpur (2008) states that despite the challenge to dual systems in the Northern discourse on inclusive education, in the absence of any schooling for children with disabilities, inclusive education in India is mostly viewed as a parallel system of segregated options. While the existing literature in this area draws attention to the logistical impediments to implementing inclusive education, the dissonance that exists between these global templates and local epistemologies remain relatively unexamined. How

do these global templates of inclusion intersect with contexts where meanings of community, inclusivity and inclusion are complex and anchored or situated to collectivist frameworks?

At the core of our understandings of inclusion and inclusivity is the notion of community, a term that has been identified by recent scholars as having epistemological origins in the global North (Lawthom & Whelan, 2012). The term community is defined in different ways. Integral to this definition are physical or metaphorical spaces that members of a community are relegated to, notions of inclusion or exclusion, and valued or devalued roles assigned or ascribed to the members of the community. Azzopardi (2012:45) defines 'community to be a normative, ideal conception of human collective life (whether place bound or not) which refers to communal ties'. However, even a seemingly simple definition like this raises several other questions. Are there universal conceptions of a normative human collective life? Can we define communal ties in universal ways or are they manifested diversely? Describing the historical context for the origins of the term, Lawthom & Whelan (2012) note that constructions of community in the Global North include community as a place, comprised of people who live in close proximity to one another, people who share common interests and bonds, and a 'set of morals, values and behavioral norms' (15). They acknowledge that there is no universal conception of a normative human collective life. In particular, the word has deep epistemological roots and cannot be disengaged from the discourse on community-based integration and the history of deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities in the Global North. Particularly within the context of community-based integration, the notion of living within the community had more of a spatial connotation, an interpretation that subsequently came under critical examination (Bogdan & Taylor, 1989a, 1989b). The advent of the community integration movement in the United States in the 1970s culminated in the shifting of people with disabilities from large segregated institutions to smaller settings, often referred to as group homes. Although group homes were physically located in the community, this change in location by itself did not necessarily guarantee that people with disabilities were truly a part of the community. Attributes of being members of the community such as having valued roles, maintaining a variety of relationships, participating in the community, being present in the community in various ways (Kincaid, 1996) were significantly absent. Instead, many scholars noted the loneliness and the predominant presence of professionals in the lives of people with disabilities, despite the rhetoric of community integration (Lovett, 1996; Pitonyak, 2002). The initial narrow interpretation of community was then expanded to include the valued roles that people occupy in the community and the kinds of relationships that people have (Bogdan & Taylor, 1989a, b), the kinds of varied activities that people engage in, and how their membership is constructed (Mount, 2000). Yet, despite the growing critical examination of this term, the discourse remains circumscribed to the constructions of community, including its anchoring in physical space, the understandings of 'valued' relationships, and its notions of identity, which are rooted in the Global North.

This definition of community may not prevail in the Global South. Within the social, historical, cultural context of India, for instance, the definition of community is complex and goes beyond

mere physical space or proximity. Instead, constructions of personhood and group membership include gender, caste, class, kinship roles, membership in the family hierarchy, and ties originating from birth and created by marriage. For instance, Anand (2015) argues that within the South Asian context, an understanding of how corporeal bodies intersect with traditional notions of space is critical to constructing a person's personhood and the position they occupy in the community. Since distancing practices and notions of purity are integral to the caste system, caste, she says, is an important part of interpreting human differences; however, current understandings of disability do not account for that (Anand, 2015). Caste, personhood, and disability intersect in ways that a person with disabilities from a 'high caste' would have more access to a community and a stronger sense of belonging than a person with disabilities from a 'lower caste,' just by virtue of their caste status.

In addition, the constructs and ethos, the nature of relationships that are integral to sustaining a community and the expectations inherent to maintaining these relationships are equally complicated. While the binaries of inclusion/exclusion and oppressor/oppressed, one might argue, are present in a community of any sort, regardless of context, the nuanced and complex ways in which they manifest themselves may not be captured through the binaries exported from the North. Indeed, understanding the experience of being included, oppressed, or even occupying an ambivalent position in the community may be obscured until one understands how that community is constructed and how the various positions of privilege and marginalization intersect to create new locations that ascribe value, personhood, or community membership to a person (Harry, 2020; Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2014). Related to this aspect is also the fact that positions of privilege and marginalization might be fluid and depend on a person's age, gender, changing roles in the family, and other factors.

Recent studies have drawn attention to the complexity of identity and personhood in collectivist cultures where identity might be ascribed and depend on one's position in the hierarchy within family and community. Thus, singular facets of identity alone may not be enough to understand the position and privilege of certain members in the family and community. Within the Indian context, women's identities are considered secondary to that of their children (John & Bailey, 2017), where being a mother of a child with an intellectual disability adds a new facet to this role. John and Bailey (2017) found that Gujarati mothers of children with intellectual disabilities saw their own needs as the same as their child's, suggesting that the identity of the child and the mother were integrally interwoven. They argue that mothers of children with an intellectual disability are placed in a position where they become advocates for their child and have to negotiate multiple selves. These selves include the larger societal expectations of caregiving associated with being mothers along with the self that they have to construct given the experience of parenting a child with an intellectual disability. Thus, their identities are continuously being constructed and reconstructed based on their gender, their roles as mothers, as well as being mothers of children with intellectual disabilities. Gender and disability also intersect in other complex ways. Marriage, which is integrally associated with constructions of

being a woman, is particularly a problem and often inaccessible for women with disabilities in some parts of the Global South, such as Pakistan (Hammad & Singal, 2015). Thus, within the Global South, constructions of disability are complex and cannot be separated from the larger collectivist structures within which identity is constructed.

Similarly, related to the interpretations of inclusivity and notions of community, is also the discourse that a community adopts to include or exclude its members. Within the Global North, this critical discourse has focused on a rights-based language in order to compel social policy, educational institutions, and local communities to provide access and be inclusive. What would be the nature of this discourse within the context of the epistemological understandings of community elsewhere? Further, to what extent is this rights-based discourse applicable to specific contexts in the Global South? Rao's (2015c) study, provides the example of two Bengali mothers of children with significant disabilities who facilitated inclusion for their children in their local neighborhood and extended families. Their children having faced pejorative attitudes and exclusion at various points in their life, the mothers took it upon themselves to educate their communities and extended families and help build relationships for their children. However, instead of using a rights-based approach, the mothers used a consciousness raising approach that evoked the *manushatto* (humaneness) within the excluders and recognized the humanity of the person they were excluding. Rooted in this approach, was a discourse that focused on evoking dormant understandings of family and kinship roles, building ties of *bhalobasha* (affection), and getting people to think deeply about their *babohar* (conduct). In many ways, the mothers were advocating for an approach to inclusion that went beyond *mere compliance* and required being *deeply mindful* of one's thoughts and consciously choosing actions that emerged from an inner space of presence and mindfulness rather than ones which were trigger reactions to an attitude uncritically imbibed from society. They were the core indigenous constructs and language of inclusion that the mothers harnessed and relied upon for their efforts. Unlike the Northern discourse on rights that is activated by advocates and activists who use the social justice framework, this approach is a didactic approach which recognizes that relationships are reciprocal and have to be continually defined and redefined in order to anchor them in their essential roots. Similar approaches to advocacy have also been noted in recent empirical studies (Harry, 2020). Based on the findings of an ethnographic study that focused on participants in the Immortelle Children's Centre in Trinidad, Harry (2020) states that styles of advocacy in parts of the Global South such as Trinidad are situated in a collectivist context where approaches are more personalistic rather than legalistic (246). Scholars have asserted the need for using alternative, non-western frames of reference, such as Amartya Sen's capabilities approach which draws as much from the western, rights-based model as from the moral responsibilities of duty, community and reciprocity that prevail in Asian culture (Artiles, et al., 2014; Hammad & Singal, 2015; Kalyanpur, 2018).

Other scholars report similar findings that emphasize the importance of understanding local epistemologies of inclusion. Based on a study that focused on the narratives of six mothers of

children with disabilities in South Africa, Muthukrishna & Ebrahim (2014) argue that understandings of disability in the Global South are closely connected to the construction of parental roles and the ways in which these roles are situated within the larger context of community. They argue that in the process of embracing a human rights approach emerging from a Global North perspective, 'issues critical to socio-cultural and political contexts of the South have been neglected in research, and the social and material realities of the lives of disabled children and their families in the South remain under-theorized' (381). They underscore that, in order to understand constructions of disability and community, we need to understand how parents construct their role and where this role is situated within the context of the social relationships within the community. The mothers in this study facilitated the inclusion of their child by resisting the dominant narratives on disability that focused on stigma. Resorting instead to the indigenous supports for inclusion of their child that were available in their families and communities, they harnessed the ethic of 'Ubuntu,' a quality reflected in a person that has a 'sense of community, compassion and shared concern for the rights of others' (381). Central to this concept is the notion that all members have a space where they belong and can be cared for. Muthukrishna and Ebrahim (2014), contrast this ethos with northern perspectives that tend to focus on individualism.

The growth of the disability rights movement in the North has brought about tremendous changes in policy and practice. Such changes include the increasing inclusion of people with disabilities and a strong emphasis on self-advocacy and self-determination. However, the extent to which a rights-based discourse would fit into a landscape where the cultural values emphasize interdependence and a community identity is debatable. How does the discourse on individual rights situate itself in cultures with collectivist orientations (see Harry, 2020)? The concepts of empowerment and self-advocacy as visualized in the west, do not lend themselves to a simplistic transfer to the Global South. In India, for instance, advocacy takes on a different form in contexts like India that are primarily collectivist in nature (Kalyanpur, 2009). Here, advocacy is not so much about the entitlement of the individual, but more about access to environments that is facilitated by 'collective obligation' (34). Further, unlike western conceptions of self-advocacy where the individual with disabilities has the primary say and agency in the choice and control of services, within India, the family still plays a key role. In the Global South, the discourse on rights may be limited to an elite few, and be relatively inaccessible for people with disabilities who are poor and disenfranchised because of other structural inequities (see Grech, 2015a; Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015).

Decolonizing disability and development

The discourse on disability and development is anchored to an epistemic viewpoint that is deeply entrenched in the colonial roots of the Empire. The search for the universals, the tendency to denote and demarcate human differences, the use of language to label and categorize the bodies of the other, are related to a colonial mindset. The rising quandaries, the

growing intolerance of ambiguities in how human differences could be constructed and the increasing dissonance created by the uncritical exploration of Northern disability ideologies, call for a transformation in thinking and practice. At the core of this dissonance is the continual imposition of a certain epistemic viewpoint on human differences and what constitutes development. What are the implications of this analysis? How does one bring about change that recognizes, values, and builds on indigenous and local knowledges and practices? Current scholarship emerging from both empirical studies in the Global South as well as the postcolonial literature draws attention to certain key facets for bringing about change. First, if change has to come, the promise lies in what Tlostanova & Mignolo (2012) describe as 'border thinking'. Border thinking, as they describe it, refers to a certain position that is 'grounded in the experiences of the colonies and subaltern empires' (60). They argue that the time has come to move beyond the postcolonial framework to decolonization of ideas, ideologies, and practices rooted in the hegemony of northern epistemic viewpoints on human differences. The 'epistemic locus' (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012) has to be the knowledge and experiences of people in the local contexts. Positioning oneself in the borders can be a strategic means to decolonize how we think about disability and development, including challenging the colonial matrix of power and honoring indigenous knowledges that offer an alternative frame of understanding (Breidlid, 2013). As we have mentioned elsewhere (Kalyanpur & Rao, 2015), the implications of this are to recognize that there are local understandings of human differences and local practices that have worked for a reason, and which uncover these local interpretations of disability and related human differences.

Second, engaging in decolonial thinking means exploring capacious ways of thinking about bodies and minds that are hybrid, and occupy the less known and often invisible spaces between the dominant models (Bost, 2019: 1562). This means resisting the tendency to succumb to received colonial constructions (Dei & Jaimungal, 2018) by labeling these spaces as indicative of 'limited progress'. It means an acute sense of self-awareness that is aware of colonialism as a form of intellectual domination, and focuses on 'developing and sharpening our thinking process and pursuing politics for transformative change' (Dei & Jaimungal, 2018: 13).

Third, on a more pragmatic level, there is a need to identify alternative strengths-based frameworks of thinking that value local strengths and indigenous knowledges of disability and disability-related practices that have developed because of local needs and local reasons (Harry, 2020). This means examining the contextual and temporal gaps that exist between intended rhetoric and actual implementation of disability-related practices in the Global South (Kalyanpur, 2015) and understanding the historical, cultural, structural, and material contexts of these countries (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2014; Harry, 2020). Expanding on this further, Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller (2014) state that there is a tendency to assume that marginalization occurs in unidimensional and universal ways instead of recognizing that there are complex and intersectional facets of marginalization as well as varied ways in which personhood is constructed (Harry, 2020). Thus, practices like advocacy and inclusivity might manifest themselves very differently in collectivist contexts (Harry, 2020; Rao, 2015b) where

relationships are important rather than an individualist stance.

Notes

[1] While recognizing that the use of the geopolitical binaries of 'global North/South' tends to lend itself to sweeping generalizations, we believe our argument is based on these binaries. We have chosen it as an alternative to the sociopolitical binary of 'minority/majority' which is based on where most people with disabilities live, or the traditional, more value-laden terms of 'developing/developed' that denote countries on a continuum of development.

[2] We draw on the postcolonial framework here, particularly the parallels introduced by the question raised by Partha Chatterjee in his chapter titled 'whose imagined community?' (Chatterjee, 1993). While Chatterjee's chapter focuses on the history of nationalism in particular and how it has been constructed, his argument for the 'once colonized' to 'claim our freedom of imagination' has a deep connection to the discourse on disability and development

[3] Ableism refers to normative notions of ability and the ways in which they exclude people based on taken for granted assumptions of the perfect body, mind, behavior, emotions, or intelligence. At the core of ableism is the 'ideology of a healthy body, a normal mind, appropriate speed of thought, and acceptable expressions of emotion' (Campbell, 2015:13-14).

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