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1

Introducing Disability and Social Theory

Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes and Lennard Davis

Introduction

Theorising disability lies at the heart of many recent social scientific engagements with the body, subjectivity, culture and society. Disability studies have developed across, through and with disciplines of the social sciences and humanities. The extent to which disability illuminates and puts into practice social theory and, moreover, the potential of social theory to add to our understandings of disability are key themes of this book. This text aims to further examine social theory and disability as resources for thought, action and activism.

Social theories of disability have been around for decades, with more critical approaches emerging around 40 years ago. The awareness of disability theory continues to lag behind that of other transformative arenas such as feminism, queer theory and postcolonialism. To some degree, disability theory has not had the sweep and global interest of these other areas due to the stigma that disability still carries, despite years of legislation and struggle. It still is not fashionable to be disabled. As a consequence, disability politics have been virtually ignored not only by dominant institutions of society but also by other politicised arenas. The disabled people's movement, while now global in scale and reach, continues to push for some of the most basic rights to education, life and health. At the time of writing, *The United Nations's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* is still being ratified (or not) by some nations of the world. Disability studies continue to be slighted in many university courses and disability theory is often absent from readers on social theory. Our aim, as editors of this book, was to invite contributors from a broad range of social sciences and ask them to inject their chosen theoretical perspectives into disability studies. This is not to say that there have not already been many exciting theoretical developments throughout the history of disability studies. Many of our heroines and heroes in disability studies have long pushed for social theories that

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respond to the ambitions of disabled people and understand and challenge the conditions of disablism.

That said, at times, some scholars who were responsible for the early writings in disability studies have questioned the relevance and application of recent theoretical work (e.g. Oliver, 2009). Their concerns appear to centre on the dangers seemingly inherent in theoretical work, namely, obfuscation, over-abstraction and 'extravagant flights of academic fancy' (Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 83). Such criticisms of contemporary theory ignore the fact that even the early writings of disability studies necessarily drew upon theoretical ideas to enhance their potency. In Britain, for example, neo-Marxist theories were key to the development of the materialist social model of disability. Those of us who have had the pleasure of reading Marx and Engels will recall the challenges and, at times, difficulties of deciphering the key tenets of their arguments. The hard work was worth it, though, when we were able to view the analytical possibilities of employing such theories to probe the conditions of disablement (e.g. Oliver, 1990). It therefore seems contradictory for some of these scholars to reject the style of contemporary theoretical work (even if they are ideologically opposed to it) when it was precisely the use of their own preferred elliptical and even cryptic social theories that allowed them to develop understandings of the material, political and historical foundations of the exclusion of disabled people that, consequently, gave birth to the arena of disability studies.

We should, therefore, not be afraid of the inherent tendency of theory to challenge our thinking through complex and difficult prose. Instead, our concern should be whether or not social theory *enhances* our understandings of disability, culture and society. We should demand theory to provide us with ideas, concepts and resources that can be used in scholarly, professional, political and personal capacities. We should allow ourselves to be courted by theory, perhaps seduced, though ever mindful of the political origins of many people's engagement with disability studies in the first place. Disability studies have developed in some national contexts in ways that appear to be more inviting to the deployment of theory. Both Thomas (2007) and Goodley (2011a) have argued that, in comparison with British disability studies, North American, Canadian, Australian and Nordic disability studies boast a more interdisciplinary and theory-friendly approach to the study of disability. The editors of this collection have aimed to capture a number of theoretical interventions that are committed to the politics of disability in the hope that theory and praxis can be seen as interrelated. We know that social theory can change everyday norms, social policies, institutional arrangements, professional acts, family practices and personal values, because when social theory works at its best it demands us to reconsider the assumptions, discourses and taken-for-granted ideologies that undergird the exclusion of some people and the accentuation of the social roles of others. Perhaps, following Braidotti (2003), social theory allows us to identify and

then deconstruct the tendency of contemporary society to uphold the life-worlds of 'the same' over those of 'many others'.

Disability studies, particularly in Britain, have tended to occupy a strong disciplinary base in sociology and social policy, often, though not exclusively, with a focus on materialist, neo-Marxist and structuralist perspectives (Barnes, Barton and Oliver, 2002; Barnes and Mercer, 2003). However, recent texts have deliberately blurred disciplinary walls and national boundaries in order to assess the material, cultural and psychological features of living as a disabled person in an exclusionary society (Hales, 1996; Albrecht, Seelman and Bury, 2003; Swain et al., 2004; Swain, French and Cameron, 2003; Shakespeare, 2006). Increasingly there has been work on the intersections of disability with other identity categories and multiple locations of marginalisation and resistance associated with feminism, critical race, queer and class analyses (Morris, 1996; Thomas, 1999; Davis, 1997; Kristiansen and Traustadóttir, 2004; Ghai, 2006; Sherry, 2004, 2007; Linton, 2005). There is no doubt that disability studies are branching out in many different exciting theoretical directions encompassing, for examples, post-structuralism (Corker and French, 1999; Corker and Shakespeare, 2002; Tremain, 2005), psychoanalysis (Olkin, 1999; Marks, 1999; Goodley, 2011b), medical sociology (Thomas, 2007) and critical psychology (Watermeyer et al., 2006; Goodley, 2011a). North American and Canadian disability studies have merged disciplines, with social scientists forming close alliances with the humanities (Snyder, Brueggemann and Garland-Thomson, 2002; Devlieger, Rusch and Pfeiffer, 2003; Michalko, 2002; Titchkosky, 2003; Snyder and Mitchell, 2006). It is important to acknowledge that debates about inclusive education have been heightened through an engagement with disability discourse (Gabel, 2005; Danforth and Gabel, 2007; Barton and Armstrong, 2007). Dominant ideas from powerful disciplines such as physiotherapy and psychology have been destabilised through importing a disability studies agenda (Swain and French, 1999; Goodley and Lawthom, 2005). Indeed, the intersectional character of disability is one of a number of reasons why we conceptualise the contemporary state of the field as *critical* disability studies. Critical disability studies start with disability but never end with it: disability is *the* space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all (Goodley, 2011a). The emergence of a critical approach to the analysis of disability may be put down to a number of developments in the 'noughties' (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009). Perhaps, most significantly, critical disability studies is characterised by what Thomas (2007) defines as the *trans-disciplinary potential* to break down boundaries between disciplines, to speak across national and regional borders and to take the responsibilities of *social* theory seriously to reinvent disability studies critically. Such boundary-breaking allows different disciplines to speak to and with one another through theoretical language around disability. In effect, disability studies works best when it forms bridges between disciplines. As Shakespeare (2010) argues, disability studies will lose

its radical potential to subvert, disrupt and deconstruct were it to collapse into a discipline in its own right.

This book aims to provide a sustained and coherent analysis of critical disability studies in relation to a host of disciplines and emerging theories, including perspectives from psychology, psychoanalysis, education, social and critical pedagogy, community work, sociology, philosophy, geography, critical race, development and women's studies. The contributors to this book each come with their own passionate interests in social theory. Behind all of their contributions is a shared opposition to the conditions of disability and ableism that continue to marginalise disabled people from the everyday realities of social life. This book draws on a host of social theory and associated concepts and claims. We have supplemented the application of theory that you will find in each chapter with a glossary at the end of the book that draws out and summarises key concepts.

Theory should do some things in the social world: enhance our awareness of inequality and, wherever possible, permit new ways of thinking affirmatively about disability. Theory can shift our focus away from the perceived pathologies of disabled people on to the deficiencies of a disabling society and an ablist culture. We agree with Margrit Shildrick when she argues that 'it is crucial that non-disabled people need to interrogate their own cultural psycho-social location as non-disabled' (Shildrick, 2009: 9). A strong theme of this text, then, is to explore theoretical ideas and concepts that may be used by disabled people and 'the non-disabled' in order for both groups to interrogate and subvert conditions of exclusion. Disability is therefore not a stigmatising embodiment of an individual but a social portal that leads to an investigation of exclusionary practices in society at large.

This book builds on previous efforts that have brought together disparate theoretical writings with the shared aim of theorising disability (Barton, 2001; Corker and Shakespeare, 2002; Davis, 2002, 2006b; Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Swain et al., 2004). Following Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) and Shildrick (2009) this text contributes to the development of critical disability studies theory (Davis, 2006a; McRuer, 2003) where disability links together other identities as a moment of reflection that Davis (2002, 2006b) calls *dismodernism*, and impairment and disability are interrogated as phenomena enacted at the levels of the psyche, culture and society. Critical disability studies recognise the complexity of disability's intersections with poverty, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality and national location. In the current climate of economic downturn and recession we clearly need sophisticated social theories that allow us to make sense of – and challenge – complex conditions of oppression and marginalisation.

Summarising the book

Part I of the book, 'Cultures', considers the cultural imaginaries and semiotic constructions that exist around disability. These chapters share the aim of

reconceptualising disabled bodies-and-minds as social sites of power, language, discourse and action. Disability is not only culturally mediated but is constituted through culture. Hence, cultures of modernity gave rise to versions of disability and ability through which the contemporary position of disability is ontologically felt and epistemologically rooted. In addition, if we accept that we are living in an era characterised by the postmodernisation of life itself (Hardt and Negri, 2000), then what possibilities for resistance and change are permitted for cultural members? Does the disparate nature of knowledge and discourse allow disabled people to challenge grand narratives of science and progress that originally marked them as lacking, deficient, repugnant and uncivilised? This part of the book also considers the kinds of cultures that we might analyse. These include cultures of disablism; cultures premised on the myth of ableism; disability cultures that have emerged through the agitations of disabled people as alternatives to disablism and ableism. We are also encouraged to consider the ways in which these varying cultures are reliant upon one another. Disability culture is a necessary response to disablism. Disablism emerges as a consequence of the prominence of ableist worldviews. Cultures also infect one another. Questions are raised about the extent to which disability culture is hijacked by, for example, nation states whose constitutions are based upon a host of disablist ideas. Disability culture might, perhaps unknowingly, appropriate some of the standards of ableism – such as autonomy, control, independence – that lead to the exclusion of some disabled people who are unable to match up to these ableist ideals.

In Chapter 2, Bill Hughes draws on the work of Norbert Elias to propose that the treatment of disabled people in the modern period is a barbaric sideshow in the long march of the ‘civilising process’. The ‘personality structure’ of non-disability in modernity transforms its own ontological precariousness into aversion for and disposal of disability. The negative response to biological and intellectual difference in modernity is strongly influenced by the tendency embedded in the ‘civilising process’ to incrementally deride the value of physical and intellectual difference and promote a sanitised norm of human behaviour and appearance. The social policy response to disability in the modern period cannot be separated from the emotional aversion to impairment characteristic of non-disabled hegemony. Hughes utilises Elias’s concepts of *psychogenesis* and *sociogenesis* to explain that the story of disability in modernity is one that develops towards the social and ontological invalidation of disabled people’s lives.

Chapter 3, by Rebecca Mallett and Katherine Runswick Cole, addresses autism as a cultural phenomenon through which they aim to understand better the ways in which ‘impairment’ is packaged and consumed within academia. In this chapter they are interested in approaching autism *critically*. They seek to understand the cultural contexts in which autism is made present and think through the associated implications. By positioning

academia as part of contemporary consumer culture, they borrow from Marxist-inspired theories to conceptualise the processes by which seemingly the most enigmatic of conditions have become produced, traded and consumed within the social sciences. They discuss the role of 'desire' and use the concept of commodity fetishism to explore what we buy (into) when autism is purchased. Through this theorising, they end by arguing that the persistent presence of autism as a largely unproblematised entity within contexts such as academia, and within the study of disability in particular, works to jeopardise the emancipation of disabled people.

In Chapter 4, Shaun Grech moves the analysis of culture up a notch, by examining the global reach of disability studies. This chapter is inspired by post-structuralism as well as Latin American writings on coloniality and neocolonialism to explore and discuss critically some of the gaps left wide open in attempting to articulate a critical debate around disability in the 'majority world'. The chapter takes on the call to decolonise the methodologies of disability studies in order to constitute a new theoretical space: critical global disability studies. While pre-empting some of the debates that are explored in Part IV of the book, Grech draws attention to the nuanced ways in which disability and disablism emerge in specific Global South contexts. His analysis considers the varying ways in which disability is defined across and within cultures; the dangers of homogenising the disability experience as one ultimately of oppression; the recognition of hybrid spaces and lives that emerge in poor countries in responses to coloniality; the very 'real' effects of impairment and bodies of pain and the importance of faith and religion in some cultural locations. The chapter warns against a critical disability studies that remains located in, and then is exported from, a Western European and North American register.

In Chapter 5, Theo Blackmore and Stephen Lee Hodgkins use ideas from Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu to explore the rise of the British disabled people's movement, the development of disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and, as they suggest, their recent colonisation by government and service agendas. Such an analysis is crucial if we are to theorise disability culture in what might be seen as a post-new social movement period of history. They ask: to what extent have the radical discourses of disability politics become part of everyday currency and discourse in welfare, educational and community settings? Writing as activists and members of DPOs they consider the ways in which disability politics is at risk of moving from the radicalisation of new social movements to new forms of organisation that are more in tune with governmental and professionalised concerns. Through employing notions of power and resistance (from Foucault) and capital, field and habitus (adapted from Bourdieu), they identify opportunities and challenges for DPOs. These are critically considered in terms of the implications for the project of impairment-management, inclusion and the preservation of the cultures of disabled bodies, minds and identities.

In Part II of the book, 'Bodies', we develop further recent analyses that have challenged a previous tendency for somatophobia (fear of body) in disability studies writings. Our analysis of bodies considers their place in the world. As Margrit Shildrick (2009: 2) puts it: living in the disabled body lays bare the psycho-social imaginary that sustains modernist understandings of what it is to be a subject. Disabled bodies are often viewed as disrupting what it means to be a natural/ normal body. The body has always occupied a platform of debate in disability studies. For some, disability studies have failed to engage with the realities of impairment (Shakespeare, 2006). For others, disability studies has not gone far enough in recognising the cultural formations of impairment (Tremain, 2005). While other scholars have inserted the physicality of the brain and body into a dynamic relational model of individual and society (Traustadóttir, 2004), in this part of the book the body emerges as a complex site for the (re)constitution of culture, technology, performance and of life itself. Never simply biological, nor a cultural entity, the body raises more questions than it answers.

Chapter 6 permits Donna Reeve to revisit Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* and to ask: what can the cyborg offer disability studies? Opinions in disability studies are currently divided; some argue that cyborg theory cannot offer solutions for the material disadvantage faced by disabled people in society, others see the cyborg as providing a way of understanding the lack of a fixed boundary between disabled and non-disabled people. As well as presenting these debates, the chapter also considers other ways of using cyborg theory to make sense of the lived experience of impaired people who have intimate relationships with technology, for example, people with prosthetics, implants or who use assistive devices such as wheelchairs. After presenting a summary of Haraway's key work, Reeve looks at the *lived experience* of impaired cyborgs and then briefly touches on *cultural* representations of disability and cyborgs within science fiction. Finally, she discusses the notion of the iCrip – a term she has coined to represent new ways of being which are (non)disabled and (ab)normal.

In Chapter 7, Jim Overboe locates and examines the impaired body in the 'inhuman register'. He notes that since the 1960s, with the advent of identity politics, marginalised groups stake out their claim of legitimacy under the rubric of citizenship. Disability activism and by extension disability studies has followed feminism, queer movements and racialised people in adopting this method of social change. Yet, he suggests, this model of self-actualised individuals within a group membership with its reliance upon liberalism to some degree disavows impairments that coexist with the disabled identity. Overboe is interested in reclaiming the 'vivacity of our impairments' while being mindful of the dangers of the seductive lure of liberalism that denigrates those with impairments. Drawing on the theoretical works of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Giorgio Agamben allows us, he argues, to shift our thinking away from the personal registry associated with humanism

(and liberalism) to the impersonal registry associated with the inhuman (which affirms impairment). Through an analysis of pain, crippled life and the scandal of impairment, he argues that these impersonal singularities of impairment can affirm impairment because they break in, thief, steal away and cause havoc in the normative human register and, ultimately, express life in productive ways. The point of this chapter is to illumine how impersonal singularities of the inhuman actually affirm impairments and thus lead to a fuller life expressed.

In Chapter 8, Tanya Titchkosky and Rod Michalko question the 'facticity' of the 'problem-of-disability'. They make use of a phenomenology-based disability studies approach in order to conceive of the oft-used, over-deterministic and under-theorised frame 'disability is a problem in need of a solution' as itself a solution to some implicit problem. Drawing on the work of theorists such Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty permits them to ask, what sort of a problem do contemporary times need disability to be? And, what is the meaning of human embodiment that grounds the unquestioned status of disability as a problem? They further draw out these issues by conducting an exploration of how the phenomenon of disability-as-problem composes university life while teasing out how the language of the problem reflects the educational world views that arise through the lived bodies that we are. They note that disability may participate in normalcy, but it can never be normal let alone be valuable, enjoyable or necessary. In the doing of this phenomenological form of description, they offer a reflection regarding what a phenomenological approach does in order to do what it does and to say what it says and then show this at work in the university milieu. The phenomenological subjectivity is exposed as a possible space to think between disability and ability.

In Chapter 9 Eimir McGrath examines the disabled dancing body. Firstly, she considers the place of the disabled body in relation to Western theatre dance and the 'legitimate' dancing body. Secondly, the disruption of this understanding of a legitimate dancing body is examined, by tracing the changes that took place during the twentieth century which eventually facilitated the inclusion of differently abled bodies within professional dance. Thirdly, she argues that when the disabled dancing body is viewed through the lens of contemporary attachment theory, then this allows us to view dance as part of a process that facilitates change. This approach, she suggests, allows us to view dancers of differing corporealities as bringing about a state of empathic attunement, where the humanity of the dancer is foremost and corporeal difference becomes merely an element of that dancer's embodied presence.

In Part III of the book, 'Subjectivities', we consider in more detail the psychological, psychical and ontological questions of disability. Appropriating Shildrick (2009: 89) one of the tasks of critical disability studies is to retrace the constitution of the normative subject and to reclaim other modes of being and/or becoming. There will be obvious overlap in this part with

others – for example ‘Cultures’ and ‘Bodies’ – because any discussion of subjectivity cannot be divorced from wider sociocultural and political factors nor issues of embodiment. In this part of the book we stay with a broad notion of subjectivity to consider how the ‘inner self’ might be understood as a relational product (that is a constructionist phenomenon) rather than a simplified individualised entity held in the heads of people (as advocated by the constructivist tradition) (Corcoran, 2009). As Shildrick (2009: 33) has noted, disability is not so much strange as all too familiar. We (whoever ‘we’ are) already know disabled bodies because they come to embody psychical fantasies of dependency/nurture that are part of the collective unconscious of the body politic. Disability, therefore, speaks of a ‘trans-historical ontological anxiety operating at a psychic level’ (Shildrick, 2009: 52): ‘it is as though each one knows, but cannot acknowledge, that the disabled other is a difference within, rather than external to, the self’ (Shildrick, 2009: 58). Disability is a particular enunciation of specific identifications, and revealing the assumptions behind how we take notice of the appearance of embodiment through our reading and writing thus allows us to grapple with the meaning of disability (Titchkosky, 2009: 34). This part of the book deals with the ontology of disablism and disability: the subjective be/comings and goings that emerge around disability.

Chapter 10, by Griet Roets and Rosi Braidotti, sets out a version of disability studies as a project of affirmative politics. While their focus is fundamentally directed on the ways in which we do and can view subjectivity as it relates to disability. Their focus is on the lives of people with the label of intellectual disabilities (and their work as self-advocates) whom they represent as affirmative activists that challenge a dominant view of impairment-as-disability as mourning and melancholia. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari they draw on their approach of nomadology in order to explore (i) notions of ontology and epistemology as they relate to disability, (ii) an expansion of our understanding of subjectivity as both embodied and non-dualistic, and (iii) a methodology that involves another way of forming subjectivity as transversal connections or assemblages with multiple others which makes our praxis nomadic.

Chapter 11, by Dan Goodley, aims to account for the subjectivities of the ‘non-disabled’ through the theories of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and the account of one of Britain’s most famous disability activists Paul Hunt. Goodley argues that the non-disabled or ableist individual and collective unconscious produce precarious subjectivities which inevitably lead to a relationship of disavowal with disability. Using Lacan’s phases of real, imaginary and symbolic, it is suggested that the non-disabled psyche becomes haunted but also fascinated by the fragmented nature of disability and the non-disabled failure to match up to ableist ideals of autonomy and mastery. Faced with such realities, a disablist subjectivity finds fault and fascination with disability. The lessons from Lacan are further illuminated

through the work of Paul Hunt's classic 1966 text *A Critical Condition* which might be read as a politicised and psychoanalytic reading of disabling culture.

In Chapter 12, Karl Nunokoosing and Mark Haydon-Laurelut draw upon insights from Erving Goffman and Michel Foucault to make sense of some aspects of the lives of men and women with intellectual disabilities who live in residential group homes. They demonstrate how the contemporary group home is still engaged in the same project of the total institution that Goffman wrote about in the 1960s despite more recent changes in its composition. The subjectivities of both the staff and the intellectually disabled men and women they support are constructed in the production-consumption of these discourses and associated 'technologies'; people have to learn and be taught how to be intellectually disabled and how to be a worker in services for people with intellectual disabilities. By analysing the referrals written by group home workers, it is demonstrated that the subject of the referral is constructed as mentally suspect or bad, his/her reasoning is doubtful or that he or she is in need of surveillance-therapy-treatment.

In Chapter 13, Fiona Kumari Campbell stalks ableism through an analysis of the ways in which dis/abled bodies and minds – their subjectivities – are culturally and often quite literally fused together. She defines ableism as a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a subjectively diminished state of being human. Ableism denotes the meaning of a healthy body, a normal mind, how quickly we should think and the kinds of emotions that are okay to express. She notes that we all live and breathe ableist logic, our bodies and minds daily become aesthetic sculptures for the projection of how we wish to be known in our attempt to exercise competency, sexiness, wholeness and an atomistic existence. It is harder to find the language and space to examine the implications of a failure to meet the standard or any ambivalence we might have about the grounds of the perfectibility project. First, she outlines an approach to expressing ableism (its theoretical features and character), and second, provides an example of how ableism works globally in the knowledge production of disability. Finally, she discusses the possibility of disabled people turning their backs on emulating abledness as a strategy for ontological and theoretical disengagement.

Part IV of the book, 'Communities', asks questions about the place of critical disability studies theory. Disability emerges in different ways in particular institutional, national and supranational spaces (Lawthom, 2010). *The United Nations's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the World Health Organisation's (2001) *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* are just two examples of the supranational location of disability that seeks to speak of disability across nations, cultures and

economies. While these developments are crucial, questions are also raised about the potential for universal conceptions writing over more localised experiences and dynamics of disability. Furthermore, as Stone (1999), Gabel and Danforth (2008) and Meekosha (2008) have demonstrated, there are real dangers of erasing the accounts of disability emerging in poor, Global South nations if disability studies theory is written from the rich metropolises of the Global North. With these critical ideas in mind we consider the community location of disability.

Rebecca Lawthom (with Tsitsi Chataika) tackles a theorisation of community head on in Chapter 14. The theoretical framework of communities of practice developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger is outlined. This approach, which has been largely ignored by disability studies, is considered in terms of its historical origins and its contemporary usage. Next this approach is considered alongside the work of a British organisation Breakthrough UK Ltd (run largely by and for disabled people) that aims to promote the independent living and employment opportunities of disabled people. Identity ownership and contestation has been a key issue for the disabled people's movement and for those who stand inside and outside it. Unpacking how disabled people may come to understand and situate their own identity and that of others is key to this identity project and the development of inclusive communities.

Chapter 15, by Tsitsi Chataika, provides a postcolonial critique of disability studies research of the Global North. Her chapter unpacks the political struggle in the disability, development and postcolonial discourses. The struggle, she suggests, is about challenging oppression, voicelessness, stereotyping, undermining, neocolonisation, postcolonisation, 'them and us' and bridging the gap between Global North (rich income, traditionally known as 'developed' countries) and Global South (low income so termed 'developing' countries) spaces in the disability and development research agenda. She seeks to bring together debates around disability and development and how they intertwine with postcolonialism. The intention of the chapter is to create a platform that is accessible to the usually marginalised Global South research communities by enabling them to make use of indigenous knowledge and building communities of trust with Global North comrades in ways that enrich a critical postcolonial disability studies research agenda.

Chapter 16 is written by Anita Ghai in the context of India. She begins by exploring the relationship between disability and karma which, she suggests, permits a sense of desolation and hope to be entertained together. This hybridisation of disability discourses is taken further in her analysis of gender and disability in the postcolonial context. She argues that an assimilation of postcolonial thinking into the critical disability studies enriches our understandings. Briefly, she examines the social framing and ideological work of disabled characters in a recent film *Black*. Using this film she underscores the dialectic between coloniser (read 'able subject') and

colonised (read 'disabled subject'). Although cinema resists simple 'answers' to the question of how gender intersects with disability in the postcolonial world, films also offer stimulating instances of the transgressive potential of 'different' bodies.

In Chapter 17, Carolyn Fromader and Helen Meekosha argue that a precondition of women with disabilities achieving equalities experienced by their non-disabled peers is recognition and respect by wider society. Lack of recognition constitutes a form of harm. Following the work of Axel Honneth, they suggest that denial of recognition is a form of disrespect that can be injurious to women with disabilities, particularly in relation to their positive understandings of themselves. Mindful of the tensions that exist in relation to the lack of recognition of disabled women from the Global South, they demonstrate how disabled women experience all forms of disrespect in their daily lives by examining three issues: violence, sterilisation and the denial and shame attached to their perceived inability to parent. Using their own organisation, Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA), as a case study, they look at the challenges and successes over the past two decades that have confronted the organisation and its members in trying to bring about change for women with disabilities. The lives and experiences of women with disabilities have been hidden from history and we are only just emerging as political actors in the struggle for human rights.

Our final chapter, Chapter 18, makes a case for the celebration of social theory and its contribution to the development of critical disability studies. In bringing together the contributors represented in this text our ambition was always to energise our thinking around the complexities of disability. We therefore hope that the ensuing critical disability studies analyses demonstrate the ways in which theory can bring to life this complexity in ways that further enable us all to challenge the often contradictory and always moving conditions of disablism.

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