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Theoretical dimensions for interrogating the intersection of disability, immigration and social work

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Abstract
This article proposes theoretical dimensions to examine the intersection of disability and immigration. These dimensions bring together knowledge from critical disability studies and postcolonial theories to inform a social justice orientation to social work practice on issues of immigration and disability. The article describes three interrelated themes that bring these theoretical dimensions together: (a) knowledge production and dominance in terms of North/South power dynamics and relations, (b) the construction and processes of Othering and how these shape the experiences of people with disabilities in immigration and (c) resistance to these constructions of Othering.

Keywords
Ableism, coloniality of power, disability, global South, immigration, postcolonialism, social justice

As social workers we engage with issues related to the lives of people with disabilities and those of immigrants, but bringing the two together has not figured prominently in our practice and knowledge base. Moreover, social work as a profession has been critiqued for its limited role in addressing disability issues, and specifically for the dominance of medical models of disability that inform practice where attention is directed to diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, cure and recovery (Dunn et al., 2006; Hughes, 2004; Meekosha and Dowse, 2007; Sapey and Oliver, 2006; Shakespeare, 2006). Such problematic focus on the medical aspects of disabilities leaves social issues such as immigration and immigrants with disabilities vulnerable and under the control of policies that value only certain bodies and abilities (El-Lahib and Wehbi, 2012; El-Lahib 2015). Thus, the dominance of medical models of disability within social work masks the marginalization

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of people with disabilities within immigration, which limits the profession's ability to question and challenge such problematic use of dominant discourses of health and ability.

Furthermore, as social workers we can no longer escape the realities of globalization, neoliberalism and other global factors that shape the very essence of our everyday experiences, especially when they reflect the unbalanced power dynamics that define Global North and South relations. With the current 'refugee crisis', we have been offered concrete examples of how the fate of newcomers from the global South is still at the hands of global North countries. Although the responses of countries in Europe and North America as well as policies in countries such as Germany, Greece, Australia, Canada and the United States have differed, it is not these divergences that are at the heart of this article. Instead, this article focuses on epistemological and theoretical underpinnings that can help us understand these responses. Indeed, this article argues that despite the differences, what brings these responses together is the continued intersection of ableism, racism and neocolonialism which shapes the experiences of migrants and refugees with disabilities. Hence, although I refer to a few case examples rather than focusing on an analysis of specific cases (which is the subject of another article – El-Lahib and Wehbi (2012)), I offer here a way to examine such examples critically.

This article explores how theorizing the intersections and interconnections between disability and immigration issues can no longer be assumed to be either locally specific or universal within the current globalized socio-political and economic contexts of the world. As Ife (2009) suggests, 'in the current social, economic and political climate of change and instability, many of the older certainties of social work practice no longer seem relevant' (p. 211). Within such a globalized climate and in light of imbalanced North/South power relations, Gray (2005) cautions us against the professional imperialism of assuming the universal applicability and dominance of social work theories and models developed in the North and argues for the importance of local knowledge from the South.

Therefore, this article proposes three 'theoretical dimensions' to help bridge between theorizations from the Global North and South to shape alternative ways of addressing the marginalization experiences of people with disabilities in both hemispheres. These dimensions are as follows: the 'colonial dimension', 'disability dimension' and 'social justice dimension' which is integrated throughout the discussion and not presented as a separate dimension. The term 'theoretical dimension' refers to a construction that brings multiple theoretical frameworks from the Global North and South together to examine transnational social work issues.

Specifically, given the complexity of the intersection of social work, disability and immigration and the diverse experiences of immigration and disability of people from differing parts of the world, this article argues for the need for a theoretical conceptualization that brings multiple frameworks together. It is important to emphasize what was just articulated: there is a diversity of experiences in global South and North contexts, and this article does not claim homogeneity of experiences of people with disabilities. On the contrary, to recognize this diversity, the theoretical foundations discussed in this article attempt to bring together theorizations from multiple sources to reflect heterogeneity in how colonialism, for example, was experienced and constructed in Latin American contexts in ways that differ from Arab contexts. Again, as stated earlier, the emphasis of the article is not on identifying divergences or even convergences in contexts, as this is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, the article offers theoretical dimensions and interrelated concepts to be able to analyse how the intersection of disability and immigration are configured in diverse ways to better understand our potential role as social workers. This discussion is supported with scholarship and examples from diverse contexts in the global South and North, and these are identified and integrated throughout the article.

Hence, far from a general theoretical description, the focus of the discussion in this article is on the areas of overlap between these dimensions presented through three key themes: (a) knowledge production and dominance in terms of North/South power dynamics and relations, (b) the

construction and processes of Othering and how these shape the experiences of people with disabilities in immigration and (c) resistance to these constructions of Othering, which is a theme that is interwoven throughout the discussion and is not presented separately.

Knowledge production and dominance in North/South power relations

A key theme informed by the overlaps between all three dimensions is knowledge production and its role in perpetuating dominance and unbalanced power dynamics and relations between the Global North and South. Quijano (2008) asserts that the expansion of Western and European science and knowledge was restricted to and guided by Eurocentric perspectives. The author adds that 'without considering the entire experience of colonialism and coloniality it would hardly be possible to explain such a peculiar intellectual track' (p. 221). In addition, Eurocentric science and knowledge were utilized to construct the Other and to create discourses that have shaped and justified the assumed superiority of knowledge produced in the North and the inferiority of the Other and knowledge produced in the South (Chataika, 2012; Ghai, 2012; McEwan, 2009; Meekosha, 2011; Quijano, 2008; Razack, 2004, 2008; Said, 1978, 1985).

A key tension in the scholarship concerns the assumed universal applicability of Northern knowledge. Specifically, within the postcolonial and critical disability scholarships emanating from diverse contexts in the global North and South, authors such as Chataika (2012), Ghai (2012), Goodley et al. (2012), Grech (2011), Meekosha (2008, 2011), and Withers (2012) question the assumed universality of disability theories and practice models, such as the social or the rights models, and call for challenging their impacts on disability theorization within diverse local contexts in the Global South. Furthermore, these authors problematize the neocolonial role of international development agencies in reinforcing dominant conceptualizations of disability theories and practice models. A notable example concerns resettlement services within refugee camps where Northern models of practice are assumed to be universally applicable (Mirza, 2011). Similarly, within the social work scholarship, Baskin (2011), Gray (2005), Haug (2005) and Razack (2009) problematize the Eurocentric roots of social work and call for a dismantling of the assumed universality of such knowledge which has been imposed in various and diverse ways on the Global South as well as on Indigenous populations.

Hence, an important beginning point is to understand how the world, under colonialism, was/is divided into two supposedly homogenous groups: the colonizers and the colonized, and how knowledge has shaped and defined power dynamics between these worlds and legitimated the knowledge of one at the expense of the Other (Connell, 2007; McEwan, 2009; Meekosha, 2011; Morana et al., 2008; Quijano, 2008; Razack, 2004, 2008; Said, 1978, 1993). However, the aim here is not to reproduce an '*us and them*' binary; instead, this argument begins by questioning these binaries and suggests that we can move beyond them only by bringing them together, an idea further discussed at the end of this article.

Of specific relevance to this article is the contention that dominant theoretical conceptions of disability have developed based on priorities, issues and experiences of people with disabilities in Global North contexts, which do not necessarily reflect realities of people with disabilities in the Global South (Chataika, 2012; Ghai, 2012; Holden and Beresford, 2002; Meekosha, 2011). Indeed, as Barker and Murray (2010) assert, '[d]isability Studies problematically transports theories and methodologies developed within the Western academy to other global locations, paying only nominal attention to local formations and understandings of disabilities' (p. 219). Parekh (2007) argues that the intersection of disability, gender and colonialism has been ignored in these fields and calls for studies that examine these interconnections. Sherry (2007) adds that

understanding how colonialism has shaped and continues to shape disability experiences and issues is an important contribution to critical disability studies. Barker and Murray (2010) remind us that the bulk of disability scholarship that has developed in the Global North 'emerged from traditions that emphasized local aspects of social applications' (p. 223) that respond to contextual issues that may not be relevant or applicable in contexts shaped by colonization. Similarly, Chataika (2012) questions transplanting 'contested' models of disability developed in the Global North to the Global South without taking into account socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions. For example, in my own experience as a disability activist and social worker in an Arab country, I have seen how foreign funders from countries such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, Canada and the United States have tied their funding to imposed models of practice (for example on early intervention with children, employment training, inclusion in school) that do not reflect the realities of the local context of practice.

Indeed, the dominance of these Northern models and theories has led to a situation where issues of importance to people with disabilities in Global South contexts are not prioritized, if discussed at all (Chataika, 2012; Ghai, 2012). For example, dominant theoretical understandings have tended to ignore the importance of prevalent discourses about people with disabilities and their experiences in terms of poverty and development (Chataika, 2012; Meekosha, 2011). In addition, the over-emphasis on Global North contexts in constructing knowledge about people with disabilities and disability issues has resulted in less importance being placed on examining transnational experiences of people with disabilities – such as immigration – especially within the context of historical colonial relations between the Global North and South. As Loomba (2001) argues, displacement is one of the key impacts of colonialism, and understanding the experiences of people who have been displaced as 'postcolonial subjects' (p. 16) needs to be brought to the forefront of theorization and practice.

To guide the development of alternative theorizations, there is a need for a postcolonial understanding of disability which, as Sherry (2007) argues, allows for 'examining the relations of domination between and within nations, "races," or cultures, recognizing the historical roots of such practices within colonialism' (p. 11). Furthermore, a postcolonial understanding allows us to examine how these practices continue in new forms of colonialism or neocolonialism (Ashcroft et al., 2000).

In her discussion of postcolonial theory and its importance for disability studies, Chataika (2012) asserts that it is 'based upon the concepts of otherness and resistance' (p. 254). The author notes that postcolonial theory focuses on the impacts of the 'colonial past' and its influences on the social and cultural contexts, as well as how this past can shape and define understandings of the world in theory and culture. Like Loomba (2001) and Sherry (2007), Chataika (2012) does not hyphenate postcolonialism, implying that the hyphen would suggest the end of colonialism and that 'post' is the way to separate between two different eras. Instead, these authors assert that colonialism is still alive and it 'will always leave some colonial remnants' (Chataika, 2012: 254). These remnants have been evident in terms of scholarship about theories and practices related to disability. Indeed, such colonial remnants continue to shape the intersection of disability and immigration by constructing people with disabilities as a potentially inadmissible social group. In a recent (but not singular) example from Canada, a Costa Rican family was denied residency because the 13-year-old son has Down Syndrome; an option is to appeal on humanitarian grounds – as opposed to human rights grounds (CBC News, 2016).I have written elsewhere about several other case examples that reflect a similar construction of inadmissibility that not only shapes the applicant's experience but also impacts on the decision for the entire family, thereby reinforcing ableist ideas of people with disabilities as 'burdens', a point I return to later (El-Lahib and Wehbi, 2012; El-Lahib, 2015).

Furthermore, Chataika (2012) argues that when it comes to disability and development, there is a wealth of knowledge and experience within both the Global North and South. However, relations of dominance between North and South dictate what counts as legitimate knowledge, how it should be disseminated and by whom. Imbalances of power have shaped how knowledge produced in the Global South has been challenged and delegitimized by 'experts' from the Global North. Speaking specifically about knowledge dissemination, Chataika contends that 'writers from the Global South seem to be fearful of being challenged about the relevance of their studies by the global North writers' (p. 260).

Returning to the social justice dimension and taking the above arguments into account, it is important to highlight the potential to resist practices of dominance in knowledge production and legitimation. An understanding of postcolonialism includes 'contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism' as well as inclusion of 'the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistance to imperialism and dominant western cultures' (Loomba, 2001: 16). Several authors (e.g. Bush, 2006; Heron, 2007; Loomba, 2001; McEwan, 2009; Said, 1978) assert that postcolonial resistance places an emphasis on decolonization which 'seeks to come to terms with the ways in which hegemonic forces of colonisation insidiously pervade the Global South knowledge systems' (Chataika, 2012: 265). Postcolonialism also includes anti-colonialism as a form of resistance which focuses on understanding and resisting 'the operation of colonialism in political, economic and cultural institutions' (Ashcroft et al., 2000: 14). Bush defines anti-colonialism as:

> any action, individual or collective, violent or lawful, covert or overt, that is critical of, opposes, upsets or challenges the smooth running of colonial rule … This definition embraces all forms of anti-colonial and anti-imperial resistance, but also cultural resistance and the small acts of day to day non-compliance. (p. 37)

Building on this understanding of anti-colonialism, several authors emphasize the need to resist the power dynamics that exist as a result of colonial histories that make it difficult for the North and South to have equal relations in terms of knowledge validation and legitimation (e.g. Connell, 2007; Heron, 2007; McEwan, 2009; Meekosha, 2011). As discussed earlier, knowledge produced in the Global North is assumed to be legitimate, universal and applicable to the various contexts of the Global South; yet the opposite is not held to be true (Connell, 2007; Meekosha, 2011). Hence, unbalanced power dynamics and relations as well as a history of colonialism have reinforced the dominance of knowledge produced in the Global North and constructed the knowledge of the Global South as inferior or rooted in traditionalism (Chataika, 2012; Connell, 2007; Meekosha, 2011).

As a form of resistance to neocolonialism, Chataika (2012) suggests bringing North and South knowledges together from the strong bases of Indigenous and local knowledge systems. Similarly, Connell (2007) as well as Meekosha (2011) propose bringing together and benefitting from theorizations developed in the Global North and South. However, in doing so, it is important to take into account colonialism and its impacts on shaping social, economic, cultural and political factors in the South and the history of power imbalances in terms of knowledge production and legitimation (Chataika, 2012; Connell, 2007; Ghai, 2012; McEwan, 2009).

Considering the history of Northern dominance, we need a new way of developing collaborations in terms of knowledge production to bring together theories from different parts of the world to better address issues of marginalization and exclusion of certain social groups. Doing so would help us articulate theories that bridge between North and South and allow practitioners and scholars to adapt them to their specific contexts and utilize them to improve the living conditions of

marginalized social groups, which is important for social justice-oriented social work. In other words, what is proposed here is not to be passive when adopting theories and knowledges developed in the Global North, but to be pro-active in how we consider and bring theorizations together to inform our practice and knowledge base.

Constructing the other and the process of Othering

As discussed earlier, the dominance of Northern knowledge production has contributed to constructing the colonized and racialized Other. Based on his explorations of colonialism in Arab and Islamic societies, Edward Said (1978) advanced a postcolonial theory of Orientalism, which is often referred to as a founding component of contemporary postcolonial theory (McEwan, 2009). Said (1978) defines Orientalism 'as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having the authority over the Orient' (p. 3). Said shifts the analysis of colonialism and imperialism from military or economic control to discourses of dominance, where knowledge production is understood to be central and connected to the operation of power, dominance and constructions of the Other.

In fact, Said (1978) asserts, 'without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systemic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively' (p. 3). Said's (1978) work was not about the Orient, but about representations and constructions of the Orient in European and Western texts, imagination, academia, culture and so on. In the case of Orientalism, the Other is constructed as 'traditional', a discourse that was essential in justifying colonizing missions to bring the people of the Orient into (Western and European) modernity.

Another theoretical analysis of colonialism and imperialism from Latin America sheds a different light on constructing the Other. Building on and challenging the limitations of postcolonial analysis, Quijano (2000) suggests relying on 'coloniality of power', which he argues is more relevant and reflective of the processes of colonial Othering in Latin American contexts. Specifically, Quijano notes that Indigenous peoples in Latin America as well as the peoples who were brought as slaves were 'conquered' only when they were stripped of their histories, languages and identities and became constructed as homogenized 'Indians', 'Negros or Blacks' (p. 219). The author adds that this conquering process was instrumental in establishing world capitalism, and led to the creation and justification of new structures of society, namely, the division between conquerors and conquered. In turn, this division was essential in 'naturalizing' relations of power and domination based on 'the idea of "race" and in the "racial" social classification of world population – expressed in the "racial" distribution of work' (p. 218).

Quijano (2000) coined the term 'coloniality of power' to refer to the construction of the Other according to class and racial hierarchies in which social relations, especially those related to the division of class and labour enforced by Eurocentric and Western (white) capitalism, were categorized and based on superior/inferior classifications of the population. Within this system of classification, European white populations were in control of the structures of society and played a role in establishing the hegemony of their modes of knowledge production. Hence, as several scholars note, race and whiteness became societal structuring principals that guided knowledge production in ways that allowed for the naturalization of racial hierarchies that maintained dominance and colonialism (Morana et al., 2008; Quijano, 2000; Razack, 2004, 2008; Said, 1978, 1985, 1993). Within the social work scholarship there is recognition that whiteness and race/racism play a key role in experiences of dominance that have perpetuated marginalization (Razack and Jeffery, 2002; Yee, 2005).

Furthermore, according to Morana et al. (2008), contemporary manifestations of coloniality of power can be seen through globalization and neoliberalism which continue to perpetuate hierarchies of race and class through neocolonialism and capitalism. As an example, Tascon (2004) argues that state borders have been an important element of colonial regimes that have led to the construction of social hierarchies and binaries. This has meant that there is a clear racial binary that shapes the social relations and structures that construct those who live within these imposed borders as dominant groups and those constructed as the outsider Others who are seen to present challenges and threats to dominant society.

Tascon's (2004) argument brings coloniality of power to bear on constructions of refugees and migrants as the Other, and as such allows us to better understand the process of Othering in terms of immigration. In her example of refugee and migrant rejection and treatment in Australia, Tascon traces these practices back to 'histories, both local and global, and dimensions of power that have inserted within them coloniality, race and whiteness' (p. 239). The author adds that this process also contributes to the construction of discourses that have naturalized the subjugation of Indigenous peoples and migrant populations. Indeed, she contends that these populations have been treated in similar ways within Australian society as racialized non-citizens, under constant surveillance, and subject to exile and/or detention. In addition, the author asserts that these populations are constructed as threats to Australian society, especially in terms of land claims that remain at the centre of the colonial struggle. She concludes that the history of colonialism and coloniality of power, with its focus on knowledge production centred on issues of race, is still a key component that determines constructions of the Other and defines the processes of how Othering of these populations is operationalized.

Similar processes of coloniality are discussed in an example from the Caribbean by Kamugisha (2007) in his discussion of the 'coloniality of citizenship' that refers to the 'complex amalgam of elite domination, neoliberalism and the legacy of colonial authoritarianism, which continue to frustrate and deny the aspiration of many Caribbean people' (p. 21). The author contends that 'citizenship' refers to the various practices, 'tropes of belonging and identity concerns that Caribbean people experience' (p. 21). He asserts that these practices are the legacy of a colonial history that has shaped social structures underlying the racial order within these postcolonial states and societies and has led to the denial of full citizenship based on racial identity and belonging.

Adding to this analysis of colonialism and immigration, writing from within the Canadian context, Dossa (2006) provides an examination of how racism and ableism operate in a way that reflects the North/South divide and defines access to citizenship for people with disabilities. In her re-telling of Fahimeh's story, Dossa (2006) adds complexity to our understanding of the intersection of racism, immigration and citizenship by integrating an analysis of the experiences of women with disabilities. Indeed, citizenship is a playground where constructing the Other and the processes of Othering are enacted. Furthermore, bringing the colonial and disability dimensions together, citizenship emphasizes marginalizing constructions that define the borders between entitled citizens and those constructed as 'aliens' who remain at the margins.

In addition to understanding the construction of the Other according to race and class hierarchies that have impacted and continue to shape immigration experiences, overlaps between the theoretical dimensions discussed in this article also include an understanding of the construction of the Other in terms of disability. Chataika (2012) notes that there is no global consensus on the definition of disability, which explains some of the theoretical contradictions and complexities that surround discussions of disability issues. In this article, disability is conceived of as a socially constructed site of marginalization and oppression where Othering processes take shape (Campbell, 2008, 2012; Dossa, 2006; Goodley, 2014; Goodley et al., 2012; Meekosha, 2011; Razack, 1998; Withers, 2012).

An important bridge and overlap between the aforementioned colonial dimension and the disability dimension discussed here is related to similarities of the Othering process to maintain dominance and control based on elimination of certain identities and the constructions of new ones that serve specific purposes defined by the dominant group. For example, bringing the discussion of coloniality of power and its role in the process of constructing the Other to disability, Grech (2011) asserts that the historical and contemporary manifestations of colonialism and domination can be seen in the 'homogenisation, simplification and generalizations' (p. 89) of disability experiences and issues within the Global South through disability theorization that is conceptualized by the North. Such processes are achieved through discourses that construct people with disabilities in the Global South as a homogenous social group facing similar marginalization and oppression regardless of their local contexts and realities, and, an intersectional understanding of identities. The author adds that such a homogenizing process contributes to neglecting issues such as poverty and shapes how people with disabilities in the South are constructed by international and Western development agencies. Such constructions are highly influential in informing and guiding these agencies' interventions in the Global South.

Withers (2012) argues that this process of Othering reflects the experiences of people who are outside normative constructions of health and ability. To better understand this experience, adopting a critical disability lens allows for recognizing and interrogating the complexities that occur when disability intersects with gender, sexuality, or ethnicity as well as sites of marginalization based on status such as citizenship, poverty, immigration and so on. In adopting this lens, Goodley et al. (2012) assert that 'disability is *the* space from which we think through a host of political, theoretical, and practical issues that are relevant to all' (p. 3, emphasis in original text). A critical disability lens informing the disability dimension allows for challenging power relations and questioning the dominance of disability studies developed in the Global North in order to allow for alternative theorizations from Global South contexts to emerge (Chataika, 2012; Ghai, 2012; Meekosha, 2011). Hence, a critical disability lens offers the space to bring contested and complementary theorizations together to interrogate and challenge oppression and marginalization of people with disabilities (Goodley, 2014).

Stemming from this critical disability lens, key theoretical concepts of 'ableism' and 'sanism' are proposed here to examine the intersection of immigration and disability. Ableism has been described as 'denoting an attitude that devalues or differentiates disability through the valuation of able-bodiedness equated to normalcy' (Campbell, 2012: 213). For Wolbring (2008), ableism operates through social structures and groups to promote the valuing of certain abilities. In this sense, ableism consists of '[d]eeply rooted beliefs about health, productivity, beauty, and the value of human life' (Rauscher and McClintock, cited in Storey, 2007: 56). In fact, Campbell (2008) contends that ableism is a combination of 'beliefs, processes and practices that produce a particular kind of self and body (the corporal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore, essential and human' (p. 153). The author concludes that ableism is reflective of the processes that produce 'ableness', implying a construction of normative bodies. Furthermore, Goodley (2014) asserts that ableism 'accounts for shifting practices associated with a contemporary society that increasingly seeks to promote … a citizen that is ready and able to work and contribute, an atomistic phenomenon cut off from others, capable, malleable and compliant' (p. xi). Thus, oppression based on ableism reflects the process of Othering leading to marginalization and exclusion of people with disabilities.

This discussion adopts Campbell's (2009) understanding of ableism who sees it as a 'conceptual tool, [that] goes beyond procedures, structures, institutions and values of civil society, situates itself clearly within histories *of knowledge* and is embedded deeply and subliminally within culture' (p. 19, emphasis in original text). The discussion here builds on Campbell's (2008, 2009)

work and utilizes the term 'ableism' to refer to the marginalization experiences of people with disabilities within immigration as they are constructed against an assumed ideal normative body. Put differently, one of the key features of ableism is that it builds on dominant understandings of normative bodies to devalue those outside the norm. These features become more pronounced in immigration policies and practices as the disabled body is constantly constructed against the *essentialized and preferred* able body. Immigration policies adopt an ableist construction of an ideal and normative body that immigration applicants with disabilities are measured against based on a set of criteria related to idealized notions of productivity, independence, health and ability.

In addition to ableism, sanism, as developed in the work of Poole et al. (2012) and Reid and Poole (2013), enriches the analysis of the construction of the Other in terms of disability, because as the authors contend, sanism is a more specific concept to refer to the marginalization experiences of people living with mental health histories. Perlin (1992) utilized the term sanism in his examination of what he called 'prejudice' in the legal system: 'Sanism is as insidious as other "isms" and is, in some ways, more troubling, since it is largely invisible and largely socially acceptable … Sanism is a form of bigotry that "respectable people can express in public"' (pp. 374–5). The concept also refers to how people living with mental health issues have been constructed as 'incompetent, not able to do things for themselves, constantly in need of supervision and assistance, unpredictable, violent and irrational' (Chamberlin, cited in Poole et al., 2012: 3). In short, Reid and Poole (2013) assert that 'sanism (or mentalism) is the subjugation of people who have received mental health diagnosis or treatment' (p. 210).

Returning to the point about bringing together Global North and South theorizations, it is important to contextualize sanism and ableism within an understanding of colonialism. As such, people from the Global South with disabilities are marginalized and constructed as the *Other of the Other*. This means that in addition to being Othered because they are from the Global South, people with disabilities are also Othered within their own societies in their countries of origin as well as their diasporic communities as a result of dominant discourses of ableism and sanism. As Holden and Beresford (2002) as well as Meekosha (2011) argue, within already marginalized Global South contexts, people with disabilities are further on the margins because of the intersection of disability with poverty, globalization and Northern dominance. The hierarchies and binaries that construct and define the relationship between colonizer and colonized are at play here in shaping and defining the construction of people with disabilities based on discourses that perpetuate Othering processes. Put differently, sanism and ableism cannot be understood in a vacuum or situated only within Northern scholarship and understandings, but need to take into account the history of colonialism. Given this understanding, the experiences of people with disabilities in immigration are shaped in terms of not only ableist and sanist discourses, but also discourses of Othering related to the perceived inferiority of the Global South.

Specifically, Ghai (2012) asserts that one of the most important meanings of postcolonial theory is that it allows for a better 'understanding of the Other, historically and symbolically' (p. 273), which can potentially help in better understanding issues of identity, representation and marginalization faced by people with disabilities. Indeed, the author adds that 'postcolonialism can be instrumental in setting the tone for engaging in the idea of disability as 'difference' rather than as an oppositional lack or inability' (p. 273). This is the case because postcolonial disability analysis troubles and disrupts the notions and binary of the 'us and them'. Chataika (2012) makes use of the 'us and them' binary to examine disability, development and postcolonial discourses in an effort to bridge the theoretical gaps between the Global North and South and to challenge the legacy of colonization; this legacy manifests itself through the construction of binary discourses such as able/disabled, normal/abnormal and so on (Dingo, 2007; Goodley et al., 2012; Meekosha, 2011; Sherry, 2007). Indeed, following the work of Edward Said and Albert Memmi, Ghai (2012) notes

that understanding the dynamics between the colonizers and colonized is essential to understanding the processes of Othering of people with disabilities. Ghai (2012) asserts 'the creation of a devalued "Other" is a necessary precondition for the creation of the able-bodied rational subject' (p. 273).

One of the processes of Othering of people with disabilities that relates directly to immigration takes places through the construction of discourses of dependency that continue to justify exclusionary practices experienced by people with disabilities (Fine and Glendinning, 2005; Gottlieb, 2001). Hughes (2007) notes that impairment and disability are associated with 'deficit' (p. 673), which has led to Othering and specifically to the construction of discourses of dependency (Hughes, 2007). Linton (1998) argues that disability has been defined in dominant discourses as the 'opposite' of ability; such definitions have emphasized discussions of impairment and have been linked to discourses of dependency. In his example of Arab countries, Turmusani (2003) notes that people with disabilities were institutionalized as a part of this social construction of disability, and this institutionalization has led to their 'categorization as an incompetent dependent minority' (p. 49). Ghai (2012) provides the example of the Indian context where disability is still painted with a brush of 'dependency and vulnerability' (p. 283).

Indeed, in a study that explored Canadian development agencies' discourses about people with disabilities in the global South, dependency, vulnerability, tragedy, charity and humanitarianism were key themes that emanated from the analysis (Wehbi, Elin and El-Lahib, 2010). Discourses reiterated the role of the North as saviour, thereby reflecting and reinforcing neocolonial understandings of relations between North and South. We see this reflected again today in another recent example from the Canadian context. In contrast to the case of the Costa Rican family referred to earlier, the family of a blind man from Syria had their refugee claim accepted and were directly sponsored by Canada instead of private sponsorship; immigration officials argued that the government gives priority to 'vulnerable groups' (Allen, 2015). While immigration decisions differed in each of the cases, in both cases notions of humanitarianism are invoked in the sense that both are admissible – or potentially admissible – if they appeal to the humanitarian sensibilities of the state.

In fact, Hanes (2009) maintains that discourses of dependency have direct bearing on marginalization and exclusion of people with disabilities in immigration, as they construct people with disabilities as a potential 'burden' on health and social service systems should they be granted immigration status, as noted in the example of the Costa Rican family discussed earlier (Hanes, 2009). In the case of the Syrian family, we can see how ableist discourses of vulnerability are compounded with those of the North as saviour to shape a situation where one family is denied entry based on disability while another is granted admissibility based on similar grounds.

Further to the discussion of dependency and vulnerability, people living with mental health histories have been systematically marginalized in immigration in ways that justify not only their construction of inadmissibility, but also their incarceration and deportation after the fact of immigration (Chadha, 2008; Chapman et al., 2014; Reaume, 2014). Chadha (2008) contends that people living with mental health issues are constructed to be 'incompetent' and 'by nature degenerates, dangerous and dishonest in disposition' (p. 11).

Returning to the social justice dimension to challenge the construction of the Other, and to enhance social work's potential to resist, the work of Cameron (2007) is important as the author argues that we need to begin by challenging Othering discourses that have been adopted in practice. Indeed, Carey (2003) reminds us of the historical involvement of social workers in the marginalization of people with disabilities (through institutionalization and eugenics, for example). Instead of relying on medical model discourses that focus on and perpetuate dependency, Cameron suggests social work needs to examine and question how and why we have adopted these vulnerability discourses of people with disabilities. The author argues for the need to shift to discourses

that revalue the agency/ability of people with disabilities. Similarly, Dossa (2006) maintains that people on the margin, such as people with disabilities, have a role to play in challenging Othering discourses. Doing so begins by challenging our understanding of disability as social workers as well as deconstructing/re-constructing dominant knowledge and discourses about people with disabilities. As Dossa asserts, this could lead to more just and humanizing processes and practices of citizenship and immigration.

Furthermore, Ghai (2012) contends that in challenging dominant discourses that shape the marginalization experiences of people with disabilities, we 'must recognize the multiple political, social economic and cultural realities' (p. 279) of our contexts. This implies a shift in understanding disability to be a 'fluid and shifting set of conditions' (p. 278), instead of being a fixed category that is defined and signified by dominant understandings of impairment. Withers (2012) adds that such fluidity would enable people with disabilities to take control over their own identity construction as a diverse social group instead of being categorized specifically based on their impairments. Goodley et al. (2012) argue that such understandings can 'shift our focus away from the perceived pathologies of disabled people onto the deficiencies of a disabling society and an abliest [sic] culture' (p. 4). This shift implies examining not the 'dependency' of people with disabilities, but the marginalizing discourses that shape experiences such as immigration.

Concluding thoughts

In ending, the theoretical dimensions and themes elaborated upon in this article demonstrate the impacts of dominance and power relations on constructing and shaping the experiences of the marginalized Other. Bringing together the dimensions of colonialism, disability and social justice allows us to be cognizant of how knowledge production and legitimation have been tipped in favour of the North, and how specific experiences of marginalization, such as those occurring at the intersection of disability and immigration, have been largely absent from the discussion.

The social work profession has been implicated in supporting this problematic history and has an important role to play in resisting colonialism and imperialism (Haug, 2005; McDonald, 2006; Sewpaul, 2006). As such, the development of theoretical dimensions proposed in this article takes into account the need for social work to more fully acknowledge and redress its historical involvement in this oppression and to be part of the creation of alternative social justice oriented discourses to guide professional practice. In doing so, we contribute to better preparing the social work profession to work at the intersection of disability and immigration and to foster its commitment to social justice at a transnational level.

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