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Title

Postcolonial and Decolonial Allyship: Researching the Third Sector from the Global North

Key words: postcolonial, decolonial, allyship, third sector research, global South research methodology

Abstract

As we (re)consider the role of the third sector in times of ongoing crises, it is important to develop research theories that unveil and disrupt what de Sousa Santos (2016) described as ‘epistemicide’, an erasure of knowledge(s) inherent in much third sector research. This means that important, specifically Southern knowledge, is often absent from subsequent responses to crises and often unacknowledged in research collaborations.

A core principle in critical theoretical approaches that are inclusive of feminist, postcolonial and decolonial theorisations for doing research is the emancipatory concept of doing research *with* rather than *about* research participants (de Sousa Santos, 2018b; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Hence, ‘rewriting and *rerighting*’ (Smith, 2012: 72) epistemes and existences otherwise

displaced – and arguably dismissed – in global North hegemonic research practices. The impetus for this theorisation is in and of itself an act of decolonizing assumptions about how and why research should be conducted and disseminated, challenging fundamental traditions of the occidental (European) scholarship that dominates the field of third sector research.

This paper aims to contribute to theoretical approaches to doing research with global South participants, at sites of many crises arising from colonial pasts and the colonality of the present, for global North third sector researchers. Drawing on key scholars across the fields of feminist, postcolonial and decolonial research theories and arising research methodologies, this paper argues for the primary step of forming allyship with researchers and research participants from the global South and First Nations Peoples within settler countries. The paper offers a set of important principles that assist in the formation of research strategies with third sector or civil society organisations. Whilst considering the traditional barriers to doing collaborative research when based in the formal settings of the university, for example, or the constraints imposed by funders, this paper also provides examples of specific qualitative research methods that encapsulate these principles.

Introduction

We indisputably live in a time of crises as evident with the impact of climate change, the war in Ukraine, the Israel Gaza war, the rollback of reproductive and sexual rights in the USA just to name a few. Yet, there is one global crisis that often goes unnoticed, ‘epistemicide.’ Defined as ‘the murder of knowledge’ by de Sousa Santos (2016, p. 92), epistemicide is arguably a more radical articulation of what post- and decolonial scholars such as Spivak (1988), Pérez (2019), and Brunner (2021) described as ‘epistemic violence.’ In her definition of epistemic violence, Moira Pérez (2019: 1) captured the essence of both concepts as ‘the denial of epistemic agency for certain subjects, the unacknowledged exploitation of their epistemic resources, their objectification, among many other.’

As we (re)consider the role of third sector research/ers in times of ongoing crises, it is important to develop research theories and practices that unveil and disrupt epistemicide as letting it continue with impunity can not only render invisible situated responses from marginalised individuals and communities especially in the global South, but also expose them to other types of violence and exclusions (Pérez, 2019: 1). To this end, we must first acknowledge and then circumvent what decolonial thinkers such as Maldonado-Torres (2004: 30) claimed to be Western philosophy and contemporary social theory’s *forgetfulness of coloniality* that ‘reproduce[s] blindness, not in regard to space as such, but in relation to non-European ways of thinking and to the production and reproduction of the imperial/colonial relation [...]’

As non-Indigenous, global North third sector researchers we, in alignment with Indigenous activists, researchers, and practitioners globally (see e.g. Kovach, 2021; Mignolo, 2009, 2011, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Smith, 2012; Tamale, 2020) argue that counteracting epistemicide calls for acts of epistemic decolonization in research and activist collaborations. While articulated against the backdrop of different colonial experiences, calls for epistemic decolonization are united in an orientation towards ‘rewriting and *rerighting*’ (Smith, 2012: 72) epistemes and existences otherwise displaced in global North hegemonic research epistemologies and practices. The onus of decolonizing research/ers is as such not merely to foster academic freedom but *epistemic freedom* (see e.g. de Sousa Santos, 2018a; de Sousa Santos et al., 2016; Mignolo, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

While multidirectional and multidisciplinary, decolonial and Indigenous scholars thus implore non-Indigenous research/ers to embark on a possibly uncomfortable journey of not just acknowledging our own complicity in epistemicide inherent in occidental (European)

scholarship that dominates the field of third sector research/ers (ourselves included) but also of taking responsibility for unlearning and undoing it. Pérez (2019: 9) succinctly encapsulated this dual responsibility of non-Indigenous third sector research/ers committed to decolonization by stating;

‘[i]gnoring that epistemic violence exists, and ignoring that one exerts it, can result in considerable benefits for an epistemically privileged subject. Thus, it is indeed a problem of "being able to see", but not of one that is solved with mere "visibility", unless we also address the social license to ignore that which sustains such ignorance.’

Attempting to move beyond mere visibility as Pérez put it, this paper aims to contribute to theoretical approaches to doing research with global South participants, at sites of many crises arising from colonial pasts and the colonality of the present, for global North third sector researchers. Drawing on key scholars across the fields of feminist, postcolonial and decolonial research theories and arising research methodologies, this paper argues for the primary step of forming allyship with researchers and research participants from the global South. The paper offers a set of important principles that assist in the formation of research strategies *with* third sector or civil society organisations and provides examples of specific qualitative research methods that encapsulate these principles.

Forgetfulness of Coloniality in Third Sector Research/ers

In examining the titles of third sector research papers published in key journals such as *Voluntas*, there is a stark absence of critical approaches, inclusive of post- and decolonizing theory to research and yet an increasing research presence and engagement with the global South by both global North and global South researchers. David Lewis (2015) previously noted the tendency within third sector research to create a binary that reflected Edward Said’s (1978) distinction between ‘the West’ and ‘the rest’. Lewis argued that:

There has long been a useful common-sense logic to distinguishing between wealthier and poorer regions of the world based on differences in the scale of human need, but the maintenance of this ‘developed’ versus ‘developing’ country category is one that today is becoming overly simplistic and unhelpfully ideological. ... we should not allow this binary view of the world

to create artificial and unhelpful silos between researchers and practitioners, and within the research field, and that we should instead promote a more unified perspective from which exchange and learning can more easily follow (2015: 2086).

In the contemporary scholarly world where there has been recognisable growth in global South theories being heard and applied across the breadth of social sciences, particularly through postcolonial and decolonial theory scholars from the global South and First Nations peoples in the global North, Lewis' suggestion of a useful common-sense logic that dominated Western (global North) research has little validity. However, even though interest in and efforts to decolonize seem particularly prominent in the social sciences (see e.g. Brunner, 2021; Connell, 2018, 2020; Khoo, 2024; Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021; Reiter, 2020), little (published) scholarship moves beyond the theoretical to the methodological implications of decolonization (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). This could possibly shed light on why most social science research/ers still do not apply ontologically, epistemologically and/or axiologically appropriate methodologies of Indigenous research (Botha, 2011, p. 315), but rather tend to appropriate, appreciate, or accommodate them (Morgan, 2003).

Lewis further argued that the creation of parallel worlds evident in third sector research with practitioners (the North and the South) is impracticable, because 'opportunities for exchange are missed [which] is an issue for the organisation of knowledge, but it is also 'raises important questions at the level of practice' (2015: 2087). Here he sought to make a key point about working together, as allies in research, between practitioners in the global South and researchers from the global North. He suggested three sets of issues to consider in collapsing the parallel worlds, first that European and North American scholars take a less parochial position 'that engages with wider global experiences', second, to 'challenge unhelpful terminologies' from the separate worlds to 'develop more rigorous, conceptually nuanced language to reflect analytical rather than contextual difference' (Lewis, 2015: 2101).

His third issue for consideration was the very practical suggestion of research-led teaching on third sector issues at university level to 'ensure that students are exposed to systematic comparative studies of the third sector, and to a range of theory and case studies drawn from both 'domestic' and 'international' contexts. If we manage to do this, the benefits will not only accrue to scholars interested in the third sector, but also perhaps to the worlds of policy and practice' (Lewis, 2015: 2101).

We would agree that the named distinctions are, as Lewis suggests, unhealthy, but choose to extend this critique to what has now been termed as a form of epistemic violence because the allyship we are suggesting is to completely reorient the dominant global North, colonial research paradigm. For example, decolonial thinkers provide a broad consensus that argues for collaborative research partnerships between the ‘Western’ researcher(s) and the ‘other(ed)’, and that these partnerships must privilege the other(ed) peoples and communities’ concerns, needs, and values, and connect other(ed) peoples and communities with all parts of the research (Bennett & Gillieatt, 2022; Datta, 2018; Denzin et al., 2008; Kovach, 2009; de Sousa Santos, 2018b; Smith, 2012).

As a process that engages with colonialism and colonality at multiple levels (Smith, 2012), epistemic decolonization necessitates ‘*consciousness decolonization*’ (Tamale, 2011b, 2020) or ‘*cognitive decolonization*’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018b) of the (re)producer of colonality. For researchers committed to decolonization, this involves continuously confronting Western philosophy’s ‘*ego-politics of knowledge*’ wherein the ethnic, racial, gender and sexual epistemic location and the researcher that speaks are decoupled (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213). Drawing on mostly Chicana, black, and – what he calls – ‘thirdworld’ feminist scholars’ positions on the situatedness of power and knowledge, Grosfoguel (2007, p. 213) explained that;

[b]y delinking ethnic/racial/gender/sexual epistemic location from the subject that speaks, Western philosophy and sciences are able to produce a myth about a **Truthful universal knowledge** that covers up, that is, conceals who is speaking as well as the **geo-political and body-political epistemic** location in the structures of **colonial power/knowledge** from which the subject speaks (*our emphasis*).

Drawing on principles of reciprocity, conviviality, complementarity and solidarity, the practice of doing decolonizing research demands a high level of contextualisation and self-reflexivity. This means that the global North researcher is compelled to unthink and rethink themselves, and the often other(ed) and/or Indigenous global South partner in the research is positioned to *willingly* rethink their lived experiences without having to unthink them (de Sousa Santos, 2018b, p. 147).

The other central argument in this paper is about recognising how the imposition of Western or global North values (regardless of their positive intent) brought into a research

context can be a form of colonial or neo-colonial imposition, creating not only dissonance but forms of ‘epistemicide’ of local, lived experience knowledges as well as global South philosophies and ways of knowing. Therefore, not only does this paper seek to break down the binary of Lewis’ (2015) ‘parallel worlds’ but argues for an allyship that asks the hegemonic Western research frame to disappear and support global South research participants to determine research practice and theory that supports their voice and objectives.

In this paper coloniality, postcolonial research theory, decoloniality and decolonial research theory are connected through a continuum of important framings and understandings of the depth of impact of colonization. As intertwined conceptualisations and theoretical approaches they are important from a research practice perspective because the scope and intent of a specific study or research project is mostly determined by the objectives of the research and the positionality of the researchers. Also, postcolonial theory was the starting point for opening the practice of decolonizing epistemologies and interrogations of power in the construction of knowledge and research practice. Grasping the value and imperatives of a postcolonial perspective of the global South and for Indigenous peoples within the global North is not only an important methodological step towards allyship between researchers but an important political stance in *doing* research.

Postcoloniality

Scholars and researchers from colonizer and colonized states are the predominant researchers in third sector literature across the world. To do postcolonial research, a researcher is required not only to embrace and recognise Southern theories but in the unthinking and rethinking of their positionality they must develop an acute awareness of how the language of Western research methodology is imbued with power to diminish and ‘other(ed)’ participants, knowledge, and contexts from the global South. In a 2006 paper in *Voluntas*, Osaghae argued for the recognition of Ekeh’s 1992 work that established an important connection and contextualization of civil society in Africa as a product of colonization. Osaghae observed of his work:

The argument to be made is that Ekeh’s theory of the two publics in Africa provides perhaps the most useful perspective for analyzing the uniqueness of civil society in Africa in terms of its colonial origins, structuration, and functions. In particular, it enables us to see why civil society has functioned

more or less as an exit site and shadow state; why, unlike civil society in the West, ethnic forces feature prominently in its structuration; and why civil society is an arena of fundamental contradictions and contestations and, therefore, why it is far from the cohesive or consensual formation sometimes sketched in the literature (2006: 234).

His paper goes on to urge understanding of the impact of colonization in African states and politics as: the imprint of colonialism as a form of instrumentality; emphasis on the state representing a domination over civil society; and explanations of African politics drawing on ‘Western experiences described as universal experiences’ (Osaghae, 2006: 234-235). Osaghae (2006) also pointed out that Ekeh noted the contestations between the colonizer elites and the colonized elites and how ‘post-colonial legitimation ideologies were also greatly influenced by the divide and rule strategies pursued by the colonizers’ through the ‘demotion of tradition as a basis for legitimacy’ and, the elevation of Western education, ethnic domain-partition ideology where the ruling class exploited ‘colonially constructed ethnic categories, stratification and all, as a basis for claiming power’ (2006: 236).

These structural observations of the impact of colonization can be seen as part of the groundwork for theorisation of how to research and collaborate with global South research allies in African states but it is important to recognise that the Latin American ‘school’ of decolonial thinkers also conceptualised ‘coloniality’ in 1992¹ (Quijano, 2000; Quijano & Ennis, 2000), and Māori decolonial scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s first book on decolonizing methodology (including the relation between the researcher and researched) was published in 1999. However, since the early work of global South postcolonial scholars research itself has undergone a powerful interrogation as a practice. The critical theory turn that was highly influenced by feminist and grass roots activist resistances to colonial legacies of patriarchy and the dominance of neoliberalism was/is missing from the inclusions of understanding the impact of colonization on the global South in third sector research.

Postcoloniality is not merely theory that informs research, it is a driver to make research purposefully resistant by opposing the Western hegemony of ideas and research practice, to challenge what Edward Said (1978) noted as the Occidental superiority over the Orient. He

¹ Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano first coined the term ‘coloniality.’ However, even though Quijano has studied Latin America extensively since the 1970s, and his first publication with the concept ‘coloniality of power’ was already published in 1992, his scholarship was not really circulated in Anglophone academia until it was translated into English in 2000.

asserted postcoloniality as a re-evaluation toward change, to confront all aspects of assertions of power:

Idea, culture, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied (Said, 1978:12).

Key early postcolonial theories emerged primarily from literary theory as voices from postcolonial countries in the form of storytelling became the main voice of the lived experience of being colonized. The idea of voice and more particularly a voice that is to be heard (Spivak, 1988) became central to reconfiguring understandings of the trauma and deep impact of having been colonized, particularly by colonizers from another continent, primarily Europeans. This theoretical positioning has led to very specific objectives in postcolonial theoretically informed research. It also demands a form of allyship from the global North researcher doing research within and for the global South.

An important component of this perspective for third sector research is to examine and question the role of external actors from the global North, interrogating the possible neo-colonial impact of NGOs and social movements, for example, bringing development solutions that emerged from global North epistemologies of progress or even 'civilisation'. The historical precedents of development efforts that drew on theories of modernisation brought with them the same types of impositions as the colonists, particularly as ODA and the funding of INGOs were about 'making them like us', reliant on a fundamental premise of othering, and failing to recognise traditional contextual knowledges, which if supported through resources for capacity were clearly relevant and most effective. Although there has been a significant recognition by ODA donors and INGOs about shifting their support to local NGOs and local peoples for effective support and action, the focus in this paper is whether researchers have come to the same realisation.

Principles of Decoloniality in/as Praxis

While the origins and to some extent orientations of post- and decolonial thinkers differ, they are united in their concern for and criticism of the hegemony of Eurocentric modernity devoid of (any) historicity of power universalised, and absorbed and internalised as much in the social fabric and consciousness of Europe/ans as in the rest of the world (see e.g. Bhabra, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2007; Mohanty, 1988; Moraña et al., 2008; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1988). The

entrenched Ethnocentrism within research/ers creates what Pérez (2019: 6) described as ‘the international division of intellectual work, that is, the allotment of certain communities to the role of epistemic agents and others to the role of objects, while still others are completely left out of the zone of intelligibility.’

In contradistinction to the singularity of Eurocentric modernity, decolonial thinkers do not prescribe a fixed, linear, or universalised roadmap for how to achieve this reconstitution. By contrast, decoloniality can, as done by Mignolo and Walsh (2018: 81), be articulated as ‘the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living; that is an otherwise in plural’ and Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) as embracing ‘other(ed) ways of knowing.’ Drawing on the Freirean-inspired notion of praxis, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) moreover contended that this serpentine movement must be guided by decoloniality in/as praxis as a socio-political standpoint, an analytical perspective, and a methodological stance.

As a socio-political standpoint, decoloniality in/as praxis is twofold; it firstly dares us to employ ‘*decolonial imaginary*’ (Pérez, 1999) whereby we think an otherwise beyond Eurocentric modernity possible, and it secondly demands that we adopt a ‘*decolonial attitude*’ which Maldonado-Torres (2017: 435) contended ‘is as much about decolonizing the sciences (conceptions of subject, object, and method) as about decolonizing society and the world (the world understood as both existing structures and the horizon of possibilities) through forms of individual and collective agency that led to health in subjects and communities.’

To understand decoloniality in/as praxis as an analytical perspective, it is useful to employ what de Sousa Santos (2016, 2018b) terms the ‘*sociology of absences*’ and ‘*sociology of emergences*.’ Whereas ‘[t]he sociology of absences [...] highlights and denounces the suppression of social reality brought about by the type of knowledge validated by Northern epistemologies, the sociology of emergences [...] captures the victims of exclusion in the process of setting aside victimhood and becoming resisting people practicing ways of being and knowing in their struggle against domination’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018b, p. 18). With this distinction between the absences and emergences, it becomes clear that Indigenous epistemologies in contrast to ‘conventional’ (Eurocentric) epistemologies ‘concern the knowledges that emerge from social and political struggles and cannot be separated from such struggles (de Sousa Santos, 2018b, p. 2).’ Decolonizing research/ers is as such markedly different from conventional research/ers as it does not mean:

‘to study knowledge or justified belief as such [but] to identify and valorize that which often does not even appear as knowledge in the light of the dominant epistemologies, that which emerges instead as part of the struggles of resistance against oppression and against the knowledge that legitimates such oppression’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018b, p. 2).

To identify and valorize Indigenous epistemologies, it is important to recognise ‘that indigenous voices in research cannot be enabled by benevolent Western practices alone’, and that decolonizing research/ers entails more than a mere modification of hegemonic modern Eurocentric knowledge traditions as cautioned by Botha (2011: 315). Moving beyond benevolence in decolonizing efforts requires the research/er to decolonize not just theoretically but also methodologically.

Informed by critical, feminist, and postcolonial theorisations, decoloniality in/as praxis as a methodological stance as such entails moving from and against the extractivist ‘*knowing-about*’ to and for the reciprocal ‘*knowing-with*’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; de Sousa Santos, 2018: 147; Smith, 2012). This means firstly not treating peoples and communities as ‘data plantations’ (Swadener, 2000 cited in Ndimande, 2013: 94); secondly, challenging the unilateralism of extraction whereby ‘those extracting are never extracted, so to speak’, and thirdly, denouncing the assumption that the sources of extraction are available up to their total exhaustion (de Sousa Santos, 2018b: 130).

It is worth noting that as a methodological stance, decoloniality in/as praxis does not presuppose a fixed set of methods nor reject all ‘conventional’ methods but rather argues against the mechanics of how conventional Western research is conducted and for the creative and contextually relevant use of methods. In their systematic review of Indigenous research methods, Dawson et al. (2017) concurrently found that ‘Western’ methods such as community-based participatory research, participatory action research, autoethnography, and photovoice have been used within Indigenous communities in efforts of decolonizing research, and that Indigenous research methods are often combined with ‘Western’ qualitative methods. One example is how Elder and Odoyo (2018) combined community-based participatory research and decolonizing methodologies in examining the development of a sustainable inclusive education system in Western Kenya.

Allyship in/as Decolonial Praxis

What the broadly outlined aspects of decoloniality in/as praxis hopefully make clear is that for non-Indigenous research/ers to be allies does not simply mean to include ‘Southern’ epistemologies as a mere corrective to the hegemony of ‘Northern’ scholarship or to turn to subalternity (Connell, 2020) nor to reject ‘everything Western *in toto*’ (Tamale, 2020: 22). Instead, allyship is about integrating non-Indigenous and Indigenous epistemologies when it is appropriate and beneficial for the Indigenous peoples and communities (Smith, 2012). To this end, non-Indigenous research/ers must work to reconstitute the epistemic agency of Indigenous epistemes and experiences. The paramount importance of reconstituting the epistemic agency of Indigenous peoples for third sector research/ers committed to supporting rather than undermining sustainable and socially just responses to crises from those affected is made clear by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012: 193) in stating that:

When Indigenous people become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms.

While Smith makes the political, ethical, and epistemic tenets of epistemic decolonization clear, it is important to note that there is not just one way of knowing, being or doing allyship in decolonizing research/ers. By contrast, decolonial thinkers articulate performative, dialogic, and dialectical approaches to decolonizing research/ers (Darder, 2008, 2015; Datta, 2018; Denzin et al., 2008). Despite the plurality of decolonizing approaches, certain guiding strategies can be put forward for decolonizing research/ers.

Given the essential nature for establishing agency in lived experience contexts, qualitative inquiry is most commonly and appropriately adopted by research/ers (see e.g. Botha, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 2005) due to its ‘potential to respond to epistemic challenges and crises, to unravel and weave, to fold in and unmask the layers of the social life and depth of human experience’ (Smith, 2005, p. 136). However, the selection of qualitative inquiry in and of itself does not lead to fulfilling the decolonial potential of qualitative inquiry. To circumvent ‘conventional’ qualitative research’s contentious history and presence as a vehicle of coloniality and continued ‘empiricist overtones’ (Bryman, 2001 cited in Botha, 2011, p. 319), researchers must adopt the decolonial attitude (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). To this end, de Sousa Santos (2018: 136) usefully contended that ‘[a]ccording to the epistemologies of the

North, method is almost everything, while the subjectivity of whoever uses that method is almost nothing; or, worse still, subjectivity is an obstacle to the right use of the method.’ Centring researcher subjectivity in the choice and use of research methods is a decisive step in moving towards decentring the ego-politics of global North epistemologies.

While often originating from conventional qualitative research (Botha, 2011), Indigenous research methodologies seem aligned with the importance of centring subjectivity in and of research/ers as they emphasise narrative approaches such as the ‘conversational method’ (Kovach, 2010), ‘storying’ (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019) and ‘yarning’ (Geia et al., 2013). When widening the scope beyond Indigenous to decolonial scholarship, reflective methods such as critical personal narratives including testimonio, performance autoethnography, short stories, fiction, creative nonfiction, photographic essays, and personal essays are similarly posited as pivotal to research/ers because of their critical approach to understanding power and inequality (Swadener & Mutua, 2007: 16). Taken together, these methods offer an ‘otherwise’ to conventional qualitative inquiry by giving primacy to subjectivity and by countering the devaluation of oral, visual, and experiential knowledges typical of conventional sciences. In this, these methods hold the potential to reconstitute the research relation from unilateralism to cooperation by inherently acknowledging that the other/ed can not only speak but speak with power, conviction, and firsthand experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 16). Decolonizing research is as such based on a premiss that it is through ‘genuine relationships and interest in knowers and their knowledge that one can expand and transform their own epistemology’ (Lipscombe et al., 2021: 7). Smith (2012) similarly contended that an important question in decolonizing methodologies is ways of ‘*reporting back*’ and ‘*sharing knowledge*.’

Considering the emphasis on relationality and reciprocity within decolonizing research/ers, accompaniment appears a particularly suitable research method to guide and anchor research/ers throughout a research process. From a liberation psychology perspective, Watkins (2015) places accompaniment firmly within a decolonial framework methodologically derived from Fanon’s (2004: 238) call for walking ‘in the company of others’ that requires both psychic and social decolonization of researcher(s) and clinician(s) in moving towards accompaniment. Based on the concept of *compañero* or friend (Goizueta, 1998), accompaniment potentially establishes a move towards decolonial knowing-with by challenging ‘cool detachment from societal struggles as the preferred mode of intellectual inquiry’ (Dobles et al., 2017: 537) thus opening up ‘reciprocal observation’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018b) within collaborative research partnerships. Effectively researcher(s)’ accompaniment can occur in different ways including

as advocate, friend, carer and so forth, possibly disrupting expected (colonial) research roles and relations (Saxton, 2021).

However, accompaniment should not be mistaken for the classic ethnographic method of participant observation as both the purpose and positionality of the research/ers differs. Accompaniment requires standing-with people and understanding relationality overall not simply documenting patterns of relationality in ‘other(ed)’ contexts (Adams, 2014: 469-70). In reflecting on her experiences of accompanying im/migrant farmworkers within the California agribusiness, Saxton (2021: 123) concurrently labels accompaniment a form of ‘pragmatic solidarity’ and deemed it a more politicised way of applying participant observation as it allowed her to follow the leads, threads, and concerns expressed by im/migrant farmworkers rather than merely following her original research protocol.

Resistances from the Global North University Research and Funding Framework

To restore the epistemic agency of Indigenous people and communities, they need to relate to all parts of research related to them to integrate Western and Indigenous epistemologies (Datta, 2018; Smith, 2012). As many third sector researchers are based within Western colonial institutions with predetermined protocols, this can at times become a challengingly high bar. One example of this would be research ethics regulations, which are largely produced and conducted in the global North (Israel, 2018), and the universal methodological and bio-medicalised ethics criteria commonly promoted by universities (Barnes, 2018). Nevertheless, a significant opportunity exists to privilege and not merely accommodate Indigenous peoples. Drawing inspiration from Datta’s (2018) reflections on conducting research with Indigenous communities in Canada, any research/ers committed to decolonization can work towards collective research ownership, data analysis and presentation.

Decolonizing research/ers demands ‘research practices that are reflexively consequential, ethical, critical, respectful, and humble’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 8). The step towards creating collective ownership is arguably to present research ideas to the desired research participants, and to then incorporate their feedback into the scope and process of the research. Any research/ers involving Indigenous peoples and communities should as such commence with one or potentially several meetings to discuss what the research scope will be, who will own the research, whose interests will it serve, who will benefit from it and how, who will design the questions and frame the scope, who will carry it out, how will it be carried out, who will be interviewed, who will write it up, and how will the results be disseminated (Smith,

2012: 10). This is an important step for potential research participants to have direct input into developing and defining research practices and projects related to them (Battiste, 2014).

Non-Indigenous researchers should however not consider this interaction a one-off but rather ensure that they are ready to and provide opportunities for changes when the intended (Western) methods or theories are not appropriate (Simonds & Christopher, 2013: 12). This approach, essential to decolonizing research practices, can hit roadblocks in seeking formal ethics approval as university and other institutional committees seek to make judgements about the detailed methods to be applied to the proposed research. The task for the decolonial researcher is to get the ethics process to embark on decolonizing its power in this context, thus grasping the depth and essential nature of allyship in producing knowledge.

When choosing a conventional method such as semi-structured interviews, it is worth remembering that interviews are most effective when research participants can use languages in which they are proficient (Ndimande, 2013). Using Indigenous languages in research not only decentres the hegemony of colonial languages, mostly English, in research, but more importantly situates the research within and simultaneously affirms the social and political contexts of the research participants (Battiste, 2014; Ndimande, 2012, 2013). However, translating interview guides into Indigenous languages and later the responses back into, supposedly, English for data analysis also comes with the risk of losing nuances and meanings in the responses (Ndimande, 2012, 2013). Battiste (2014) contended that '[n]on-Indigenous researchers must learn Indigenous languages to understand Indigenous worldviews.'

Decolonizing research/ers requires modes of analyses recognised and valued by the communities in which and with which the research is conducted. While software such as NVivo is commonly used within qualitative research, it is important to be mindful of Simonds and Christopher's caution that linking abstracted themes may be compatible with Western methods but may also be an aggressive action from an Indigenous perspective as it 'changes the relationship between the storyteller and the receiver of the story and loses the relationship of the pieces of the story to each other' (2013: 13). Collective data analysis can be significant for the research participants in understanding and influencing how their research participation is transformed into a written format (Datta, 2018: 18). Non-Indigenous researchers must consider other modes of analyses to ensure that analysis is not merely conducted according to a modified, but essentially hegemonic modern Western knowledge traditions (Botha, 2011: 315). Ways forward could be to choose qualitative methods such as photovoice with inherent

iterative analysis component, or to conduct ‘conventional’ analysis such as coding of interviews together with research participants.

In negotiating the conduct of decolonizing research, the issue of institutional approval through ethics and funding applications presents further implications for postcolonial and decolonial research/ers. Seeking to transform perceptions of research in these institutional mechanisms that so often guide, limit and surround research projects is part of the ongoing decolonizing of hegemonic global North research methodologies. One approach to this is for institutional bodies in civil society to begin to recognise the importance of decolonizing practise in the way they cultivate their intellectual and/or research communities through their missions and objectives. In the case of ISTR, for example, this requires a deliberative opening and facilitation of listening to the voices of our global South members and resisting the hegemony of the global North English language academe as the most valued or as the norm. Such inclusivity is occurring to some extent and as can be noted by diverse leadership on the ISTR Board, regional organisations and activities in Latin America, Asia and to some extent in African countries and through the growth of particularly Chinese scholars in its publication *Voluntas*. But as a community of researchers there must be greater dialogue that challenges the Eurocentric and English language dominance if it is to be a truly international site for knowledge production and one that recognises the long-lasting imbalances created through colonization.

Conclusion: Being a Research Ally

The purpose of this paper was in one sense, for us as global North third sector researchers, to position ourselves as allies in explaining our understanding of conducting post- and decolonial research as a form of praxis. This required not only an exploration and embrace of global South scholars’ perspectives and expectations of practising decolonial and postcolonial research, but an interrogation of our own positionality as third sector researchers. There are, no doubt, a range of challenges for researchers educated and trained in the hegemonic global North research paradigm, therefore there are some inherent dangers in adopting a decolonial, postcolonial approach. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) have clearly articulated some decolonial dangers that are applicable across the rewriting and re-righting of global North collaborations with Indigenous researchers and in the global South context. These include: 1) the risk of simplifying, generalising, and over subjectifying the other/ed; 2) believing that decolonial struggles are always “ethnic”, predominantly rural as well as being

devoid of the institutional impersonal isms of dominant systems; 3) the risk of commodifying decoloniality as the property of a group of individuals; 4) co-opting the rhetorical use of decoloniality within spheres of power as a replacement for alternative and critical, approaches as outlined in our paper and 5) thinking, imagining, and seeing decoloniality only from the outside of the matrix of modern colonial power. In other words, there is scope and place for incorporating postcoloniality and decoloniality within our isms and institutions and in collaborative research that may commence from the global North.

As with political alliances that support self-determination and processes of decolonization, global North third sector researchers can support resistances to ongoing colonising practices and impositions in both supporting alternative local knowledge and knowledge production and supporting the objectives and agency of global South communities. This is not only most likely to occur in research beyond the state, within civil society but is central to the interests of third sector researchers interested in supporting social change that produces greater capacity to deal with and avert the type of crises now present in the contemporary world.

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