revista Observatório

e-ISSN nº 2447-4266
Pslmss, v. 11, n. 1, 2025
http://dx.dxy.xrg/10.20873/hft.2447-4266.2025v11n1a07en

RESEARCH ALONGSIDE PEOPLE WITH SIABILITIES: a transmethodological and anti-ableism proposal for the field of Communication

PESQUISAR-JUNTO DE PESSOAS COM DEFICIÊNCIA: uma aposta transmetodológica e anticapacitista para o campo da Comunicação

PESQUISAR-JUNTO A PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD: una apuesta transmetodológica y anticapacitista para el campo de la Comunicación

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Received on: 16.06.2024
Accepted on: 03.30.2025
Published on: 06.03.2025

ABSTRACT
The text presents key dimensions for the construction of methodological strategies in research alongside people with disabilities, focusing on issues within the field of Communication. Mobilizing transmethodology as a conceptual anchor, repositions disability within its social dimension and intertwines methodology and citizenship through anti-ableism lens, seeking to present nine premises that shape the work of the research alongside people with disabilities, aiming for the co-production of emancipatory knowledge and the exercise of communicative citizenship.

KEYWORDS: Persons with Disabilities; Communication research; Transmethodology; Anti-ableism; Communicative citizenship.

Introduction[1]

By positioning people with disabilities (PwD) as *communicating subjects*[2], we advocate for the construction of a transmethodological framework that recognizes the interrelationships this group maintains with media systems and processes. This framework aims to critically engage with the multiple dimensions, intersections, and mediations involved in meaning-making (Maldonado, 2013a; Bonin, 2018).

In a proactive manner, we present elements that underpin the process of *research alongside people with disabilities*, grounded in the commitment to build

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[1] This paper was previously presented at the 32nd Annual Meeting of Compós, held at the University of São Paulo in 2023; and its developments were discussed at the 17th International Seminar on Transformative Methodologies of the Amlat Network, held at the Federal University of Mato Grosso, in Cuiabá, in November 2023.

[2] Those referred to by Maldonado (2013b, p. 90, our translation), who relate to the media in ways that are "fluid, chaotic, structured, conditioned, free, negotiated, framed, and subversive"; subjects understood through perspectives other than those constructed to fit within functionalist, positivist, and technicist demands.

transformative, anti-extractivist, and post-abyssal knowledge, as proposed by the Coletivo de Coimbra (2020).[3] This proposal emerges from an investigative context that sought to identify possible characteristics of communicative citizenship among people with Down syndrome (Berni, 2024a). This, in turn, brings us back to the beginning of the scientific process, when we — researchers *without disabilities*[4] — faced a crucial crossroads: could we research people with disabilities? What epistemological, methodological, ethical, historical, and civic assumptions should we engage with?

The urgent demands that PwD bring to the field of Communication; the precarious scientific structures[5]; the defense of the human right to communication; and the scientific responsibility we embrace in defending science as a project of transformation and social emancipation (Maldonado, 2011), challenge us to embrace this task.

For this journey, it is essential to adopt the biopsychosocial model of disability as a premise — one that understands disability as the interaction between physical impairments and cultural and psychosocial barriers. This signals a shift from the medical and individualized model toward a structural and sociocultural perspective. Understanding disability as interaction compels us to (re)think methodological strategies and postures, especially when these subjects take on a central role in research projects.

Historically, communicatively, and scientifically, people with disabilities (PwD) have had their right to a voice and social participation minimized, controlled, and/or denied. In other words, others have spoken for them. Thus, when we recognize PwD as co-participants in the research process — that is, as companions in the scientific journey and co-responsible for the production of knowledge — we align ourselves with the core premise of the epistemologies of the South, acknowledging the voices of these communicating subjects with disabilities as valid knowledge, without the need for validation by others.

This understanding situates scientific inquiry as a collective process, resonating with multiple voices, knowledges, cultures, and practices that enrich and amplify the

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[3] By the Coletivo de Coimbra, we refer to the researchers who conducted their investigations under the guidance of Maria Paula Meneses and Boaventura de Sousa Santos. It is important to critically contextualize that the works signed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and cited in this thesis will be referenced using the collective marker "*et al.*", in recognition of the proven collective authorship that was erroneously monopolized by this author.

[4] We also indicate that, in due course throughout the text, the hegemonic understanding of disability will be explicitly rejected.

[5] Here, we echo the barriers that, in the Brazilian context, largely hinder access for people with disabilities to graduate programs.

production of knowledge. In other words, it envisions a different kind of researcher-participant relationship — one marked by the strengthening of bonds of complicity, partnership, and empathy, which are considered vital to the kind of scientific model we aim to achieve.

To this end, we must abandon the notion of the "researched subject," and instead promote the de-hierarchization of the investigative relationship: *research alongside, research in the company of, research in partnership with*, joining together distinct forms of knowledge — those derived from academic structures and those from popular, everyday, ancestral, and millenary traditions, which the co-participant in the research carries and which the scientist seeks to understand.

The issue of "speaking for the other," especially in the context of nondisabled researchers conducting studies with people with disabilities, challenges the entire research construction process.[6] The task of broadening understandings that position research as a collective act, one that occurs in the relationship between the researcher and the co-participant subject (Santos et al., 2020; Maldonado, 2013a), leads us to the reflections of Linda Alcoff (2020), who understands speech as an act of enunciating subjects and naming realities. Alcoff, in turn, challenges the notion of speaking *for* others, arguing that "those who speak for others must only do so based on a concrete analysis of the specific power relations and discursive effects involved" (2020, p. 430). She therefore advocates for the conditions of dialogue and the practice of speaking *with*. In this context, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2010) rejects a total retreat from speaking for others and critiques the stance of "intellectual self-abstention," which assumes that subaltern and oppressed subjects — such as PwD — are fully able to represent their own authentic interests within existing power structures. Spivak (2010), therefore, proposes the notion of speaking *to*, where the researcher does not abdicate their discursive position nor idealize an authentic voice of the oppressed, but instead opens up space for the subaltern to produce "counter-argumentation," contributing to the emergence of new narratives, insights, and forms of knowledge.

This article proposes to gather constitutive aspects of a way of thinking and a *transmethodological* approach that provokes, unsettles, and challenges students, graduate researchers, and scholars to (re)think how they engage people with

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[6] It is also important to critically address the prevailing power structures that prevent people with disabilities from accessing graduate programs and from conducting research and engaging in debates about the communicational demands of the disability movement itself. At the same time, it is essential to reaffirm that, upon entering graduate spaces, people with disabilities should not have their research agendas limited to their condition as persons with disabilities —but they can, if they choose to.

disabilities in their research—using scientific structures to “listen to them” and to be allies in the production of transformative knowledge. In doing so, it seeks to build epistemological and methodological alternatives for the field of Communication.

The social construction of disability

The media–disability interface (Ellcessor, Hagood, & Kirkpatrick, 2021) presents a broad field of scientific investigation — from how “audiences” engage with media to the “media’s representation” of people with disabilities — intersected by debates about autonomous and free access to communicational content and tools that enable the exercise of communication. At the same time, this field remains underdeveloped in terms of the volume of research and academic spaces that prioritize its demands. The lack of awareness regarding the specificities of this interrelation creates dangerous gaps, often undermining intervention projects and public policies aimed at upholding the human right to communication for these subjects with disabilities.

Within this framework, it becomes relevant to think of disability as a *social construct* (Diniz, 2007; Skliar, 2015; Marco, 2020), since the "non-disabled" body is only defined in contrast to what is labeled as disabled. This evokes the anthropological perspective of *alterity*. We might consider the invention and exclusion of disabled alterity based on the meanings constructed around normality (Skliar, 2015). “There is only a person with a disability because the idea of not having a disability was created” (Marco, 2020, p. 27). This offers an entry point for approaching disability not solely through the lens of health, but also through a social perspective: we do this by shifting disability away from the medical model — which internalizes and individualizes the issue — and toward a *biopsychosocial* approach, framed within structural and sociocultural terms. That is, disability as the interaction between subjects and a range of barriers — structural, behavioral, and cultural — that inhibit these individuals’ equal participation in society, resulting in limitations, disadvantages, and exclusions.

By framing disability as a social construct, Débora Diniz (2007) draws attention to the insensitivity of social contexts regarding diverse bodily expressions as valid ways of life. For instance, visual impairment does not inherently imply isolation or suffering; there is no biological determinism for exclusion — what exists are different rhythms and specificities. What we have is a hegemonic societal model built to privilege sighted individuals over blind or visually impaired people. Carlos Skliar (2015) points to the need to challenge what has long been considered normative, true, and habitual:

> To understand the discourse of disability is to reveal that the object of this discourse is not the person in a wheelchair, or the one who uses a hearing device, or the one who does not learn according to the expected rhythm and form of the norm, but rather the social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control how the bodies and minds of others are imagined and constructed (Skliar, 2015, p. 18).

The relationship between *body and society* thus becomes central to understanding the concept of disability: is it the “disabled body” that limits participation in common life, or is it the oppressive and insensitive contexts that segregate “disabled bodies” by failing to accommodate specificities and diversities? The interpretation of disability as *interaction* is grounded in this dilemma. With this lens, we can begin to approach one possible entry point for thinking about disability within the field of communication: could it be that *media, communicational, and journalistic processes are themselves disabling*, given that they generally fail to ensure accessibility resources that would allow subjects, in their specificity and diversity, to engage with the media in an autonomous and free manner? This reframes the discussion of disability from being solely about individual limitations and instead articulates it in social, cultural, and structural dimensions.

By adopting this perspective on disability, we find strong foundations for claiming the *human right to communication* (Guareschi, 2013; Berni & Bianchi, 2023) and the *communicative citizenship* (Mata, 2006; Claudio, 2016; Saggin, 2020; Oliveira, 2021; Maldonado, 2022; Berni, 2024b) of people with disabilities. Methodologically rethinking our research practices must aim at building *transformative knowledge*—knowledge that recognizes and guarantees the exercise, influence, participation, and free, autonomous, and civic engagement of people with disabilities in and through communication.

The problematic of speaking for people with disabilities

The hegemonic project of power perpetuation has historically involved silencing voices, erasing cultures, excluding demands, and restricting the capacities and possibilities of action of minoritized social groups. Science can serve either as an instrument for maintaining oppressive hierarchies or as a tool for liberation. This necessarily involves choosing which scientific project we wish to contribute to.

Rejecting the positivist and imperialist perspective of science is a fundamental step in rethinking scientific practices, horizons, and processes. Science must be repositioned in service of life, the common good, and the transformations necessary for social emancipation — stripping it of the glamour and seclusion of the researcher's office and of its shallow extractivism. This calls for investing in the *building of affective bonds* between researcher and co-participant, embracing the *craftsmanship of research*, and *welcoming other knowledges*—those that have long been marginalized or scientifically ignored. We thus recognize the need for a reinterpretation of the world, given that traditional interpretations have been shaped to meet the desires and needs of those who created them.

This reinterpretation must also address capitalism, which predominantly structures our relationships and experiences, delineating social castes and oppressing all those who do not feed its machinery. People with disabilities, for example, are one of the groups regarded within this framework as *disposable and invalid*, relegated to a status of *non-citizenship*. Drawing from Adela Cortina's (2020) discussion on *aporophobia* within the capitalist system, we understand citizenship as a kind of transaction, where only those who engage with and uphold the rules of the capitalist game — such as the able-bodied, white people, taxpayers, shareholders — are deemed worthy of normative benefits. In other words, if you or a particular group fuels the market, your reward is citizenship, democratic well-being, and the full exercise of rights. Consequently, mar and vulnerable social groups — such as people with disabilities whose sensorialities differ from what is expected by the hegemonic societal project — are not considered worthy of citizenship, simply because they are not seen as contributing to the capitalist engine. *Scientific production* also becomes a domain of power, restricted to a few who, once included, reproduce and sustain existing power relations.

This reflection becomes crucial when we look at the *spaces of knowledge production* and acknowledge how *slow and limited* the inclusion of people with disabilities remains in this context. Although there are policies in place to foster affirmative action in graduate programs[7], it is evident that mere reservation of seats

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[7] In 2016, the Brazilian Ministry of Education, through Normative Ordinance No. 13, urged Federal Institutions of Higher Education to present "proposals for the inclusion of Black individuals (both Black and Brown), Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities in their graduate programs (Master's, Professional Master's, and Doctorate), as Affirmative Action Policies."

does not ensure *access, inclusion, or permanence*, especially in environments that are *structurally not designed* with their experiences in mind.[8]

Even acknowledging the small number of disabled colleagues within graduate programs — and recognizing the many demands these subjects have in relation to Communication, including accessibility, representation, and citizenship — we are led to an *ethical reflection* about continuing research, particularly given that we are two *non-disabled researchers*. How can we conduct this research? How should we position ourselves? What stance should we adopt? Certainly, the proposal of *research alongside* becomes a key strategy in this process.

The first step is to *recognize the oppressive structures* that prevent people with disabilities from occupying spaces and "speaking for themselves." This awareness of the *privilege of speech* must be coupled with the posture of *allyship*, amplifying voices that have been socially and scientifically repressed, blocked, or silenced (Alcoff, 2020). In this context, the concept of *existing violently* invites deep reflection. Eliane Brum (2021), writing as a white woman engaging with the Amazon Rainforest and its peoples, acknowledges that her existence — shaped within hegemonic structures — violates, segregates, and annihilates other ways of living. Drawing a parallel that seems powerfully relevant, we might ask: *how do our conditions as sighted, hearing, walking individuals*, within the modern societal project, contribute to the *violence* experienced by people labeled as "disabled," who are cast to the margins of society?

By recognizing ourselves as *violent*, and at the same time *committed* to an *anti-ableist project* — one that values the full lives of people with disabilities and their autonomous, accessible, and free experiences — we take on the responsibility of *forging alliances*. This means working to *amplify the cracks*, the ruptures, and the reformulations of the structures that oppress the full existence of these subjects—including scientific and methodological structures.

Transmethodology as an entry point

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[8] As a point of reflection, I draw attention to the program in which we were enrolled—the Graduate Program in Communication Sciences at Unisinos. This program received the highest rating in the most recent four-year evaluation conducted by CAPES, which classifies it as a program of excellence. However, in a consultation with the program's administrative office, we were informed that there is currently no known researcher with a disability enrolled or affiliated with the PPGCC/Unisinos. It is worth noting, however, that in 2016, the PPGCC/Unisinos awarded a PhD to Janaina Pereira Claudio, the first deaf woman to earn a doctorate in Communication Sciences in Brazil.

Transmethodology presents itself as an ethical and subversive stance against hegemonic models of knowledge production. Our goal is not to feed the positivist, structuralist, and bureaucratic machinery, but rather to break with this logic and co-produce a science committed to social transformation. This perspective is adopted as a foundational premise, as Maldonado (2013a, p. 44) states: “any scientific work, no matter how sophisticated and rigorous it may be, has no deep philosophical or ethical meaning if it does not commit to humanity, life, cultures, social transformation, and the well-being of the world.”

It seems inappropriate to use the same tools, structures, tactics, and methods that have historically been deployed in the service of extractivism, extermination, and domination of different groups, societies, and cultures. In other words, doing socially committed science first requires *unlearning* (Rufino, 2021); *de-westernizing* (Torrico, 2020); *decolonizing* (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018); and *counter-colonizing* (Santos, 2023) the canonical knowledge, methods, and techniques imposed by scientific, epistemological, and intellectual colonization across the globe.

Transmethodology arises in response to this scenario, especially as it embraces the multidimensional and multicontextual nature of the field of communication. It is not possible to build robust, serious, and socially accountable inquiries using exclusive or totalizing logics. We can conceive of transmethodology as an epistemological perspective that seeks to question, deconstruct, and propose new methodological designs—those that emerge from the specificities of the object-problem and from the co-participants in the research process. The very act of methodological problematization constitutes the combination and reformulation of methods in dialogue with the singularity of the issue at hand. Thus,

> the simple application of methods as a strategy for knowledge production is rejected; instead, it is asserted that any appropriation and application must be preceded by necessary methodological problematization, which guides the investigative work and leads to a consistent, pertinent, and fruitful assembly of a 'methodological complex' unique to each research endeavor (Maldonado, 2019, p. 203).

We thus assume methodology as a specific stage in the manifestation of our object-problems, demanding from us attention, *craftsmanship* (Mills, 2009), *affection*[9]

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[9] Which leads us to reflect on the researcher–researched relationship, recognizing that the strengthening of bonds of complicity, partnership, and empathy is healthy and necessary for

(Maldonado, 2014; Aguiar, 2013), an *ethical-political position, inventiveness, companionship*, and a willingness to break with canonical and dogmatic thinking. In line with this approach, Jiani Bonin (2013, p. 58) rejects understandings that place methodology in a subordinate role in the research process:

> The methodological dimension cannot be taken as minor, as a mere technical operation whose validity would be guaranteed by the canonical application of codified precepts from methodological catechisms followed to the letter. Its reduction to the ritualism of applying well-established methodological formulations — still prevalent in communication research—invites us to reflect on the inadequacies of researchers' epistemological-methodological training (Bonin, 2013, p. 58).

Researchers who aim to achieve social transformation through science—those who research *from the South and for the South* (Santos et al., 2020; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018) — must assume that methodological designs and constructions: "require specific problematization in dialogue with epistemological, methodological, and theoretical dimensions, to establish and operationalize a fruitful and consistent research structure." (Maldonado, 2019, p. 204). In our particular case, when conducting *research alongside people with disabilities*, we understand the need to challenge and expose new paths (not merely methods) that enable other scientific endeavors in the company of people with disabilities — endeavors that differ from those historically adopted by the Health Sciences and later appropriated by the Humanities and Social Sciences. These traditional approaches treated people with disabilities as objects to be studied, expelling them from the research process, restricting their participation, and hindering the structural transformations that are only possible through science conducted *with* — not *about* —this group.

"Nothing about us without us": foundations for researching alongside people with disabilities

This reflection is rooted in the principles of transmetodology (Maldonado, 2013b) and anti-ableism (Marco, 2020). Shedding ableism — understood as "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the

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the scientific model we aim to build.

corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human" (Campbell, 2001, p. 44) — is a fundamental task, as it "denies the plurality of gestures and non-gestures, stiffles desire, kills the will, and thus strips autonomy from subjects who are read as disabled" (Marco, 2020, p. 18, emphasis in original). Practicing an anti-ableist methodology necessarily involves companionship in knowledge production; deep listening to voices, gestures, and non-gestures; the design of accessible and welcoming methods and practices that enable the full and multisensory expression of disabled people's particularities; as well as strategies for amplifying their demands for dignity, citizenship, and rights.

We outline, through nine premises, the foundational thinking that supports the practice of *researching alongside people with disabilities* — with the communicational context as our horizon, though its entanglement with other fields of knowledge is entirely feasible.

Recognizing the structures of oppression that hinder the access and permanence of people with disabilities in knowledge production spaces — such as Graduate Programs — and, therefore, in scientific practice itself, stands as the initial premise. To *research alongside people with disabilities*, it is necessary to question the absence of this group within laboratories and research groups, as well as the resulting outsourcing of scientific projects to *non-disabled people* — even when these projects center the demands, particularities, and specificities of people with disabilities. That is, it often involves *delegating* speech — which is synonymous with power — to others rather than to people with disabilities themselves.

It is not enough to simply recognize and build *anti-ableist* research; it is equally important to position oneself as an *ally* in the reinvention of spaces, opportunities, and rights. By recognizing and stressing the barriers of segregation and inviting *people with disabilities* into the collective journey, we commit ourselves to the practice of a *sociology of absences*, as advocated by the Coimbra Collective (Santos et al., 2020, p. 19), aimed at transforming absent subjects into present ones — "as an essential condition for identifying and validating knowledges that may contribute to the reinvention of social emancipation and liberation". *Bringing these subjects into presence*, enabling them to take part in the scientific co-production of knowledge (and power), is a political, urgent, and central act for *anti-ableist* methodologies.

The *second premise* also draws from the *epistemologies of the South* (Santos et al., 2020), based on the virtues of the *post-abyssal researcher*, with *reciprocity* as an essential element for the deep experience of the senses. As such, "*the post-abyssal* *researcher must learn to imagine the sensory potentialities repressed by the naturalization of current sensibility, both their own and that of the group with whom they share the research*" (Santos et al., 2020, p. 262). *Modern science has been trained to see and hear only what it wants to see and hear.* In contrast, the "*post-abyssal sensory experience is, above all, an experience of reciprocity: to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, and so on*," affirm Santos et al. (2020, p. 239). What emerges here is an investigation that embraces *multiple sensorialities and their multidimensionalities* (Santos et al., 2020; Maldonado, 2013b). To *see deeply* also means to observe absences —and even the invisible and the unimaginable. *Deep listening* stands in opposition to *abyssal listening*, which trains the ear to hear only itself, choosing when and what to hear. "Profound self-silencing is the necessary condition for hearing the voice of the inaudible" (Santos et al., 2020, p. 254).

The *deep experience of the senses* within the context of *researching alongside people with disabilities* evokes, above all, that *sensory differences* — between hearing and non-hearing individuals, sighted and non-sighted individuals, among others — should not be stigmatized, but rather embraced as gateways into *alternative universes of experience and sociability with the world*. It becomes crucial to *recover the notion of disability as interaction*, recognizing and affirming multiple other sensory realities — those not conventionally defined as standard—as *legitimate and valuable allies in the investigative process*.

The *next two premises* present conceptions that traverse scientific practice in its processuality but that, for us, become central axes of contribution to a still incipient interface between *media and disability*. The *third premise* echoes *methodological craftsmanship* (Mills, 2009). Just like disability, understood through the *biopsychosocial model*, takes on particular characteristics in each individual — shaped by their context, stimuli, and multidisciplinary, multisensory, and interdisciplinary care — it is not possible to present a single protocol that serves as a standard for research conducted *alongside people with disabilities*. Each research project must be designed, challenged, and built *from and with* the realities of its co-participants.

Exploratory research (Bonin, 2011) is a legitimate tool for personalizing the journey one seeks to begin. In this context, the *craftsman-researcher*, in partnership with the other co-participants of the investigation, has the opportunity to test, embrace, and abandon hypotheses, welcome and incorporate alternative demands, observe habits, and understand specificities that, by essence, should be present not only in the methodological strategy but also in theoretical and epistemological problematizations. *Craftsmanship* as a premise of *researching alongside people with disabilities* resonates with the practice of a creative, artisanal, and inventive craft in which the researcher-craftsman is aware of the entirety of the journey, creating not only an *affective bond* with the "work" but, above all, a *reflective and committed bond* with its processuality. It is about having the autonomy to create, invent, propose, test, (re)formulate methodological procedures, moving away from a perspective of simply replicating methods and research techniques.

The *research-of-research* (Bonin, 2011; 2022) emerges as the *fourth premise*. There is still a long way to go for the field of Communication to move beyond its ignorance regarding the interrelations, uses, practices, and representations of *people with disabilities* in media and communication processes. Nevertheless, there are notable efforts by researchers and research collectives who take on this commitment, and it is precisely in the journey *"with and from them"* (Bonin, 2011, p. 32, emphasis in original) that research reveals its strength. It is a praxis that sustains and nourishes the work of constructing, reformulating, and inventing theories, methods, and investigative procedures:

> [...] by producing a critical examination of research and reflecting on its contributions and shortcomings, it allows us to think about areas in which we should invest to qualify our productions, to visualize lines of epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and thematic investigation that we need to strengthen (Bonin, 2022, p. 315).

The *research-of-research* thus becomes a space for *dialogue, renewal, exchange of knowledge and experiences* in a process that strengthens both the investigation itself and the *researcher-subject*. We can observe the powerful interweaving between *craftsmanship* (unique, individual, specific, etc.) and the *collectivity* present in the *research-of-research*. These are, at first glance, contradictory seams that open up fruitful pathways.

The *next five premises* are interwoven through the dimension of the disabled body and the care that methods and techniques must take to allow its full manifestation, without enclosing significant and revealing aspects of the subject. Is it possible to carry out research aimed at understanding the reception of people whose disability impedes their speech? What kinds of attention must be given when researching with journalists with limited mobility? Each case will naturally present its own particularities; what remains is the need to strip away the *ableist lens*, be attentive to specificities, and design *anti-ableist* tools in order to research *alongside* this group.

The *fifth premise* sheds light on the trap of conceiving the *person with disability* in their humanity solely through the prism of their disability, thereby ignoring the *multidimensionality* that constitutes them. People in communication carry with them *sociocultural mediations* (Martín-Barbero, 2003) that will shape, condition, subvert, produce, and construct meanings through the interrelationship they maintain with the media and communication processes. Disability should and can be taken as a guiding element to investigate reception, uses, practices, appropriations, representation, etc., but without the illusion that this marker alone is sufficient to account for the complexity of the social and communicational entanglements of these subjects. Thus, the debate on *intersectionality* is essential. Elements such as gender, class, racial-ethnic relations, religiosity, sexuality, and territoriality cannot be overshadowed when one seeks to understand the identity of a person with disability and their interrelation with the media and the world. Maldonado (2013b, p. 90) stresses the importance of this perspective: "subjects in communication today are social beings who live and experience their practices of meaning in multiple contexts, in diverse spheres [...] and in multiple dimensionalities."

As a methodological tool for this exercise, Fernanda Carrera (2021), for example, develops the *intersectional roulette* as an instrument capable of identifying traces of intersectionality in the experiences, practices, and social and communicational expressions of the subjects. The aim, thus, "is not to understand the intersections that compose the subject, but to identify those that are mobilized — by the subject, their interlocutors, audience, or those who invoke them in the construction of utterances and which leave marks in the discourse" (Carrera, 2021, p. 12, emphasis added). It is essential to read subjects taking into account *negotiated identities*, including in the case of *people with disabilities*.

The *sixth and seventh premises* work together: *communicative accessibility* and the *exploration of sensorialities*. By communicative accessibility, we refer to the resources, strategies and practices, methods of language and communication (such as Audio description, subtitles, Sign Language, Braille, for instance) that maximize the autonomy, mobility, and quality of life of *people with disabilities*. This understanding cannot be limited to technical-linguistic precepts alone, as it embraces the natural and constitutive diversity of all human beings, "and considers disability within the processual and media scope. Since the entire communicational ethos was planned and created to serve a fully healthy and perfect body — something as absurd as it is unattainable for almost all humans throughout their lives" (Bonito, 2024).[10]

Within the field of Communication, efforts have been made to construct *accessible communication* for the free and autonomous consumption of people with disabilities. In another vein, discussions are emerging around how to practice *anti-ableist communication*, which involves, among other things, the way one relates to sources, characters, users, and so on. This is the entry point that interests us in the debate we bring here: to think of research practice as accessible. If the *co-producing subject* of the investigation uses Brazilian Sign Language to communicate, and I, as a researcher, do not master sign language, I must proactively seek an interpreter or translator to participate in the process. Are the structural and architectural environments in which the research takes place accessible to people who use wheelchairs or have reduced mobility? If the research dynamic involves writing, is it equipped with tools that allow the participant to use the Braille system? Other parallels could be drawn to illustrate this, but our goal here is to call attention to the care needed in the relationship with these subjects, so that research does not itself become a segregating and exclusionary barrier.

The *exploration of sensorialities (seventh premise)* intersects with accessibility by seeking different ways of communicating. The centrality of the body comes back into focus. The body, emotion, touch, smell, taste, gestures, and feelings — often excluded from research — return as first-line allies. Bodies are performative; they are at the heart of social struggles, and the disabled body communicates within this context.

The *eighth premise* unfolds from the discussions presented above and stems from the provocation regarding *affective accessibility*, highlighting the epistemological virtues carried by subjectivity and emotion. We also embrace affective accessibility as a tool for exploring sensorialities. Is it possible to guarantee access to affection through legislation? *Communicative accessibility*, for instance, is a right enshrined in law (Brasil, 2015). Sônia Caldas Pessoa (2019b) draws attention to the fact that interpersonal objections and social dynamics — resulting from fragile accessibility conditions associated with disability — diminish interactions between *people with disabilities* and others, including among themselves.[11] We understand affective accessibility as:

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[10] Verbal information stated during the defense of our thesis "Cidadania comunicativa de pessoas com síndrome de Down: características reconhecidas e experienciadas" (Communicative Citizenship of People with Down Syndrome: Recognized and Experienced Characteristics), on October 29, 2024.

[11] To illustrate, Pessoa (2019b, p. 25) presents several questions: "In what moments have we managed to communicate with a blind person without touching them without consent? Have

> [...] daily encounters in which communication — through all the possibilities of being with the other — is present without restrictions. Communication marked by presence and absence. Interpersonal communication as an experience without limits, except for those mutually agreed upon by the subjects themselves. Communication in which the body is the center of action and interest. Communication through feelings and affections, with potential accessibilities between different subjects (Pessoa, 2019b, p. 26).

This reinforces the need to adopt welcoming, barrier-free attitudes toward the involvement of diverse bodies in our everyday relationships, scientific work, and in companionship with people with disabilities who co-participate in our research endeavors.

The *ninth premise* (which concludes this list within this thesis, though not the broader, ongoing debate) affirms the value of 'marginal writing,' or *apocryphal writing*. Apocryphal not in the sense of questionable authorship or inaccuracy of the information presented, but in terms of details, structures, and contents that are not easily accommodated within scholarly writing or in the formal sharing of research findings. The comings and goings, the doubts, the reformulations, the experiences, the ableism, the listening, the speaking, the affective learning, the complicities and confidences — in short, a particular, emergent universe that demands *deep and radical craftsmanship*. Presenting the field diary is as valuable as presenting the results themselves. We must advance the scientific maturity of our knowledge about disability and its entanglements with media and communication products. We do not have the luxury of discarding any element that might spark new questions, theories, or methods.

Evidently, many other questions could be raised. By highlighting nine areas of attention, we share some of the experiences embraced throughout this journey as a student–researcher–learner *alongside people with disabilities*. We offer them as part of practicing our scientific citizenship, deepening our commitment to the demands of people with disabilities within the field of communication. We do so with the aim of advancing the full exercise of *communicative citizenship* and the human right to

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we ever resorted to silence when an autistic person feels confused in overstimulating and chaotic environments? Have we had the patience to repeat an explanation to a person with an intellectual disability? What about the microphone placed right in front of someone's mouth, preventing any possibility of lip reading for a Deaf person? [...] Have you ever experienced the discomfort of speaking to the companion of the 'person with a disability' instead of addressing them directly?"

communication for *people with disabilities*, while reaching out to scientific allies and companions — of struggle and solidarity — in defense of communication, citizenship, and human rights.

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RESUMO

O texto apresenta dimensões basilares para a construção de estratégias metodológicas em pesquisas na companhia de pessoas com deficiência, tendo as problemáticas comunicacionais como interesse. Aciona a transmetodologia como ancoragem conceitual, reposiciona a deficiência na sua dimensão social e entrelaça metodologia e cidadania pelo viés anticapacitista, buscando apresentar premissas que configuram a empreitada do pesquisar-junto de pessoas com deficiência, visando a coprodução de conhecimento emancipatório e o próprio exercício da cidadania comunicativa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pessoas com deficiência; Pesquisa em comunicação; Transmetodologia; Anticapacitismo; Cidadania comunicativa.

RESUMEN

El texto presenta dimensiones básicas para la construcción de estrategias metodológicas en investigaciones junto a personas con discapacidad, tomando las problemáticas comunicacionales como interés. Activa la transmetodología como anclaje conceptual, reposiciona la discapacidad en su dimensión social y entrelaza metodología y ciudadanía desde una perspectiva anticapacitista, buscando presentar premisas que configuren la empresa de investigar junto a personas con discapacidad, con el objetivo de la coproducción de conocimiento emancipador y el propio ejercicio de la ciudadanía comunicativa.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Personas con discapacidad; Investigación en comunicación; Transmetodología; Anticapacitismo; Ciudadanía comunicativa.