

BIG IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD OF DISABILITY

WORKSHOP 3. Information Pack

Can I Speak Now? Spivak's Big Idea

Nicola Grove and Gertraud Kremsner

About the Workshop

About Nicola and Gertraud

Background to Spivak's big idea

Cinderella Talkshow

About the Workshop

The workshop will happen on Zoom. You will be sent a link

1. Saying hallo - your name and ONE thing you want to tell us.
2. Nicola and Gertraud will give a short talk with some slides
3. Some preselected persons will act in a roleplay
4. Discussion - what does this mean to you?
5. Final thoughts

This time, you don't need to prepare anything for the workshop.

If you are one of the actors, please make sure that you know your role.

You could bring some props which will help the audience to know who you are.

ABOUT NICOLA AND GERTRAUD



Nicola Grove is a member of the Social History of Learning Disability Group at the OU. She researches communication and storytelling with people with learning difficulties. She is interested in how people understand complicated ideas.



Gertraud Kreamsner is from Austria, but currently works in Germany. She is a professor for inclusive education at the University of Leipzig. For her research, she works together with people with learning difficulties and with refugees. She is interested in how people experience differences in power.

Nicola and Gertraud developed the first theory workshops for people with learning difficulties in 2014, with Sam Grove, Nicola's son.

Background Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak and her big idea

Gayatri Spivak was born in 1942 in India. She now lives in the USA. And she works at a very famous university there – the Columbia University.

Spivak is very interested in how people at the margins of society can speak for themselves.

She is particularly interested in people who are oppressed in many different ways.

Spivak calls people who have difficulty speaking up 'subalterns' - like soldiers who have to do as they are told.

She saw this happening in India.

For example: poor and uneducated women often do not have a voice.

The situation is even worse when they live in countries which were taken over by other nations.

We call these countries 'colonised countries'.

For example, for 200 years, India was ruled by Britain and South Africa was ruled by white people, although those who had lived there for thousands of years were black.

"Subaltern" people can be found everywhere in the world.

Spivak says that people who are left out don't have a say at all. They are ignored

- by society and
- by intellectuals who claim to speak for them.

Some people actively speak AGAINST subaltern people.

Others may mean well when they speak FOR them. But in the end, even they do not let them speak for themselves. They do not have the right to speak.

In our research, the idea of the subaltern was very useful. We did research together with people with learning difficulties in institutions. Many of them were recognised themselves when they learned about the subaltern.

The Cinderella Talkshow

We're are watching a talkshow. We are the audience and observe what is happening. The show lasts about 20 minutes.

It shows Gayatri Spivak's point that people who are not valued, low status "subalterns" are denied speaking rights

The talk show is about the amazing romance between the Prince and Cinderella. We want to hear from everyone involved in the story. This being the BBC, we have to be even-handed....

And as for Cinderella herself... well, she will get her chance... at some point...

You will meet:-

The Talk Show Host

He is running the show. He thinks the Prince is wonderful and that the Royals are there to rule us. He loves it when people argue and get upset on his show, as then it gets in the papers.

The Prince

The Prince knows he is very important and that he has done a beautiful thing by marrying a poor humble girl who will look up to him. He does like it when people bow down to him...

The Stepmother and stepsisters

They feel very upset that nobody sees things from their point of view. It's not easy taking on someone else's child. They did their very best. But, honestly, this girl loves housework !

The Fairy Godmother

She is a real advocate for Cinderella. She made the whole thing possible and she couldn't be more delighted.

Cinderella is very shy, so it is good that her godmother can speak for her.

Cinderella

She likes running a house and she is very good at it. Nobody has actually asked her yet what she thinks. They have all acted like they know best.

Dictionary

The subaltern. In an army, the subaltern is a junior officer who does not have much power.

When we talk about the **colonies**, and power, a **subaltern** is someone who is shut out by the rulers and whose own knowledge is not valued.

Speaking rights - being able to say what you want to say. You may be able to *talk*, but can you *speak*?

Colony - a country which has been taken over and is ruled by another country. This map shows countries that used to be colonies of Britain.

Further readings:

Spivak, G. C. (1988): Can the Subaltern Speak? In Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (eds): *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_\(postcolonialism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subaltern_(postcolonialism))