FQS FORUM: QUALITATIVE SOCIAL RESEARCH SOZIALFORSCHUNG

Volume 26, No. 2, Art. 7
May 2025

Doing Sociology *With* People: Disability, Coloniality and Reflexivity in Institutional Ethnography

Abass B. Isiaka

Key words: reflexivity; institutional ethnography; disability; coloniality; academic homecomers; listening guide; sociological intervention

Abstract: In this paper, I offer an embedded approach to reflexivity in institutional ethnography (IE). I draw on a study conducted with disabled students in a post-colonial higher education context to show why and how existing approaches to reflexivity in IE have been inadequate in preserving the voice of subaltern subjects. I engage with the question of what reflexivity means for "academic homecomer[s]" (ORIOLA & HAGGERTY, 2012) who have been educated in the global North, going to research in the South. By proposing a decolonial IE that demands *biographical, epistemic, analytical and transformational reflexivity*, I advance the arguments for IE to move from a "sociology for people" (SMITH, 2005) to a sociology *with* people who are being ruled by the "colonial matrix of power" relations (MIGNOLO & WALSH, 2018, p.4). With a decolonial IE, I take a reflexive approach to understanding how the trans-local conditions of coloniality coordinate the social relations of inclusion and participation for disabled students. I conclude that while IE allows the opportunity to empower those being ruled by a matrix of domination with the knowledge of how things are organised, like some other participatory research, it does not offer researchers a way to work with the people on how to transform their everyday actualities.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Translating IE Concepts for Disability Inclusion Research
   2.1 Making the ontological and epistemological shifts
   2.2 Taking a standpoint when entering the social?
   2.3 Texts and ruling relations
   2.4 The use of work
3. Doing Reflexivity in IE
   3.1 Biographical reflexivity
   3.2 Epistemic reflexivity
   3.3 Analytical reflexivity
   3.4 Listening for the Plot
   3.5 Transformational reflexivity
   3.6 A sociology of transformative actions
4. Conclusion

References

Author

Citation

Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research (ISSN 1438-5627)

1. Introduction

Institutional ethnography was developed by SMITH (1987, 1990, 1999, 2005, 2006). She described IE as a scholarly alternative "sociology for people" (SMITH, 2005), "a sociology that translates that concept into a method of inquiry as IE is not just a methodology, but a *sociology"* (p.1). SMITH argued that it is important to start writing sociology from where people are in their everyday lives and further explore the social relations and organisations in which they participate but may not be visible to them (ibid.). [1]

Researchers using IE as an approach strive to ground social science in the actual activities and material conditions of the individual as a *materialist* method of mapping out what happens to people by situating social organisation knowledge under the assumption that social relations and structuration occur through texts (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2002). IE is a feminist-inspired sociology, built on the experience of women who have been marginalised and oppressed not only by the patriarchal society, but also silenced by male-dominated mainstream sociology (REID & RUSSELL, 2018; SMITH, 1987, 1999). Started as a "sociology for women" (SMITH, 1987, p.1), but in response to the essentialist critique of the Western feminist projects, on the basis that it excludes other forms of oppression such as class, race, disability and coloniality, SMITH later advanced the scope of IE to a "sociology for people" (2005). She maintained that people participate knowingly or unknowingly in the processes that organise their lives and others. The role of an institutional ethnographer is then to strive to explicate the interface between individual experience and their negotiation within a macro-institutional web of ruling relations. [2]

An institution is conceptualised as a "metaphorical bundle of social relations that cluster around and coordinate specific societal functions such as health care, immigration, security and education" (NG et al., 2013, p.2). To institutional ethnographers, this definition offers the possibility of examining activities that are associated with more than one institution in the contexts of local sites or work processes, such as a network of agencies or organisations in different locations, together making up an institution. In the case of my study, I used IE to map out the work that goes into the enactment and implementation of disability inclusion policy in the Nigerian higher education context, starting from the everyday experience of students with disabilities. [3]

The term IE does not imply the traditional ethnographies of institutions; instead, the "institutional" in IE is to be discovered in motion through the exploration of the everyday practices of ruling relations, defined as trans-local forms of social organisation mediated by reproducible texts and discourses. IE is also a radical departure from traditional ethnography—which was historically purposed to interpret cultures of "primitive" societies (GEERTZ, 1996, p.97; see also WOLCOTT, 1999)—in that IE researchers are concerned with the interpretation of the institutional processes in a problematic everyday world, building on GARFINKEL's ethnomethodology (1967) and BURAWOY's extended case method (1998; see also SMITH, 2005). Thus, the ethnography in IE is a

commitment to people and their actualities, a "commitment to discovering 'how things are actually put together', 'how it works'" (SMITH, 2006, p.1). [4]

As observed by MURRAY (2019), it is possible for researchers to know how things work through their everyday observations, experiences, discussions with people, and reading. Using IE as an approach, however, helps them to focus on textually organised ruling relations, which is central to understanding how things work. With this understanding, IE can be used to map social relations (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2002), to show how people's lives are caught up in institutional processes that extend far beyond their immediate locale (SMITH, 2005). In essence, the aim of IE research is to "explore the institutional 'powers that be', which are interconnected and embedded in texts of various forms and functions and through these texts people's activities are organised trans-locally, across time and space" (MURRAY, 2019, p.13). [5]

However, as scholars like MURRAY (2019) and WALBY (2007) have argued, in IE's traditional focus on "sociology for people" (SMITH, 2005) the researcher is often placed in a privileged position, interpreting participants' experiences from an external, authoritative perspective. In this paper, I build on those critiques by suggesting a shift from a sociology *for* people to a sociology *with* people, emphasising the need for more collaborative and participatory approaches. By engaging with decolonial theories and practices, I reflect on the use of IE to study disability inclusion at a Nigerian university, proposing a reflexive methodology that centres on the voices and experiences of disabled students while acknowledging the researcher's positionality in the field. [6]

I also examine the complexity of researching issues or people "close to home" described by VANGKILDE and SAUSDAL (2016) as *over*ponderabilia, which means "the risk of overthinking seemingly familiar statements and practices when studying people" (§1) or issues close to home. Through this, I offer reflexive tools for "academic homecomers" (ORIOLA & HAGGERTY, 2012)—scholars educated in the Global North going back home to the Global South to do research. [7]

I start by examining some theoretical tools provided by IE (such as epistemological and ontological shifts, standpoints, texts, ruling relations and work) in Section 2 to highlight how they have been used in this study and my challenges doing IE in a postcolonial context. In Section 3, I present an embedded approach to reflexivity in IE by arguing that while biographical reflexivity is important in qualitative research, this should be done in connection with epistemic, analytical and transformational reflexivity as a path to doing a *decolonial institutional ethnography*. I then conclude my analysis by revisiting the key arguments in this paper (Section 4). [8]

2. Translating IE Concepts for Disability Inclusion Research

In IE, a set of conceptual tools is offered that allow researchers to examine how institutional processes shape individual experiences. Although various scholars have outlined these tools (e.g., CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2002; DEVEAU, 2008; SMITH, 2005, 2006), it is widely accepted that no two IE studies are identical. SMITH (2006) emphasised the need to avoid theoretical dogmatism when applying IE, encouraging flexibility in its practical application. I used IE to explore the experience of students with disabilities (SWDs) by shadowing their daily and nightly campus activities across six months on a university campus in Nigeria. The study also involved over 60 interviews with students and other policy "actors", such as disability unit staff, lecturers, counselling support services, volunteers, and principal officers of the Federal University of Arewa (hereafter, FUA) (pseudonym) and document analysis of the university's strategic plans and reports. In this section, I explore how key IE concepts have been instrumental in shaping my research on disability inclusion, as well as my contribution to what I term *decolonial institutional ethnography*. [9]

2.1 Making the ontological and epistemological shifts

Researchers using IE are required to make significant ontological and epistemological shifts. These shifts are akin to what KUHN (1970 [1962]) described as a *paradigm shift*—a fundamental change in understanding the world. SMITH (2005) acknowledged that her own transition to IE took over 25 years, and as a newcomer to this methodology, I, too, find myself grappling with established paradigms that IE critiques. As highlighted by REID and RUSSELL (2018), institutional ethnographers and IE itself are not immune from SMITH's critique of other approaches to sociological inquiry. [10]

Considering this complexity, my approach to disability inclusion commenced by analysing national policy texts, such as Nigeria's National Policy on Education and the National Disability Act. These texts frame the problem of disability as one rooted in "discriminative animus" (SMITH G., 1990, p.633) or attitudinal barriers, coded in my research as institutional cultures. However, within IE's ontology, researchers are expected to move beyond mainstream sociological abstract concepts to focus on actualities—lived experiences that reveal how social relations are organised. Making this shift required a reflection on the ontological implication of attributing agency to structures or concepts like institutional cultures, which lack determinate referents and instead focus on the experiences of embodied knowers—people whose actions and daily realities offer insight into "*how* things happen in the social rather than *why*" (DEVEAU, 2008, p.6). [11]

Epistemologically, this shift entails reconsidering how knowledge is acquired, represented, codified, and communicated in relation to the social world. My initial perspective of disability and inclusion, shaped by an ideological framework rooted in policy and academic texts, which reinforces a medicalised view of disability that focuses on fixing the individual, was similarly challenged. In IE, researchers are expected to treat policy texts not as neutral political statements but as conduits of

power, institutional discourses and ruling relations that structure and subsume people's everyday actualities. Through IE, I began to see how the texts I was following could potentially work as mechanisms of policy violence, perpetuating the exclusion of SWDs in higher education in Nigeria. This epistemological shift led me to prioritise experiential knowledge—understanding disability and inclusion through the lived experiences of students with disabilities. This *experiential way of knowing* (SMITH, 2005) allowed me to explore how disabled students navigate inclusion policies and the actual work they do to access the university in the Nigerian higher education. [12]

2.2 Taking a standpoint when entering the social?

SMITH's idea of taking a "standpoint" (2005, p.9) is central to IE, serving as the entry point into the social. Beginning from the standpoint of marginalised groups —in this case, SWDs— I could map how institutional processes shape their lives. This approach does not seek to generalise from a specific group but to understand the connections between people and the institutional arrangements that organise their social relations. [13]

In previous IE studies, scholars have taken the standpoints of specific groups to examine how their daily activities are organised by larger institutional processes. For example, GRIFFITH and SMITH (2004, p.1) examined "mothering work" by starting from the experiences of single mothers to understand how their efforts to support their children in school were shaped by institutional expectations placed on families. Similarly, DEVEAU (2014) began from his standpoint as a disabled researcher to explore workplace accommodations. In this study, I took the standpoint of SWDs in a Nigerian university, focusing on how the work of disability inclusion is organised and experienced. [14]

The idea of the standpoint as a way in, however, is problematic. The debate about the theoretical conception of subjects and subjectivities revolved around whether the subject is "situated in" (BENHABIB, 1995, p.20) or "constituted in" and through power/discourse formations (BUTLER, 1995, p.42), poses an empirical challenge to what can be known about the subject through experience (DOUCET & MAUTHNER, 2008). In other words, as a method of inquiry starting from the actualities observed by the researcher or as narrated by the participants, IE is caught in the web of "transparent account problem" (HOLLWAY & JEFFERSON, 2000, p.3), where respondents' accounts are assumed to give direct access to authentic aspects of their experiences and lives. Preceding the BENHABIB-BUTLER debates on the "perceived death of the subject" (DOUCET & MAUTHNER, 2008, p.401), SCOTT (1991, p.779) argued that one cannot use experience as the basis for knowledge, and that "it is not individuals who have experience but subjects who are constituted through experience". This explains why it is difficult to hold on to narrated narratives from experiences, as the only source of knowledge about the social. [15]

Ethnographers are arguably presented with narratives or pseudo-realities constituted by discourses (DEVEAU, 2008). SMITH (2005, p.24) also concurred

that "the experiential can't be directly translated into the factual" but argued that experience is a valid starting point for discovering how discourse shapes that experience. Thus, IE researchers maintain that experience is real but anchored in discourse, as it is the "point d'appui" through which the ethnographer goes to explicate the institutional processes that shape that experience (CAMPBELL, 1998). Even though SMITH (2005) noted that discourse itself is among people's doings, seared into the actualities of their lives and organises their relations, she cautions that IE researchers must be careful of what she calls "institutional capture or discourse, capable of subsuming or displacing experientially based knowledge for ideological knowledge" (p.155). [16]

2.3 Texts and ruling relations

Texts play a crucial role in any IE research, serving as tools that mediate and organise the social relations of individuals across time and space. According to SMITH (2005), ruling relations are complex social relations that are textually mediated, linking individuals to larger institutional and bureaucratic systems that structure their everyday lives. These ruling relations are not only embedded in formal institutions but also in the texts that shape and regulate people's activities —from policies and reports to timetables and institutional records. [17]

IE researchers go beyond analysing the content of texts; they examine their generalising effects (DeVAULT & McCOY, 2006) to understand how texts obscure or transform knowledge, influencing how individuals participate in institutional processes. In this context, texts are seen as active agents in organising people's attention, structuring how they engage with their surroundings, and shaping their activities. For instance, SMITH (2005) highlighted the concept of a *text-reader conversation*, where individuals read and respond to texts, becoming organised by their meanings and participating in institutional practices without fully recognising the broader power structures at play. [18]

In my study, texts such as national disability policies, university inclusion protocols, and even lecture timetables serve as entry points for understanding how ruling relations shape the experiences of disabled students. By focusing on the *text-reader conversations* between these students and the institutional documents they interact with, I could trace the ruling relations that coordinate their daily lives. For example, students with disabilities must navigate a range of texts—from admission guidelines to inaccessible course materials—each of which contributes to the broader system of ableism embedded in the university's organisational structure. These texts mediate the students' experiences and reveal the institutional processes that reproduce exclusionary practices. [19]

Furthermore, I followed both regulative "boss" *texts* (GRIFFITH & SMITH, 2014, p.11) and normative *small texts*, which include major legislative acts, such as Nigeria's National Disability Act, as well as everyday texts like lecture timetables and solicited meeting reports, respectively. Analysing these texts enabled me to map the ruling relations between local and extra-local settings, highlighting the disjuncture between formal policies and the lived realities of disabled students. By

connecting the *entry-level informants*—the students—with *level two informants*—support staff, lecturers, and administrators—I could see how institutional practices perpetuate inclusion or exclusion (ISIAKA, 2024). This approach allowed me to uncover both acknowledged and unacknowledged forms of labour required to navigate and implement disability inclusion. [20]

2.4 The use of work

The concept of *work* in IE extends beyond traditional paid labour to include all the activities—both recognised and unrecognised—that individuals perform to fulfil their daily responsibilities. GRIFFITH and SMITH (2004) described this contrapuntal conception of work as any intentional action that people undertake, whether for themselves or as part of an institutional process. In the context of my study, the everyday efforts of students with disabilities to access education in a Nigerian university are seen as *work*—a form of *policy work* that they must engage in to access the university, participate in university life and fix the barriers created by institutional policies. [21]

For students with disabilities, this work includes securing university admission, finding accessible classrooms, arranging for interpreters, and training support peers. These activities go largely unacknowledged in formal policy discussions, yet they are central to the student's ability to participate in higher education. SMITH (2005, p.154) noted that "*work is intentional* and occurs in specific contexts, under particular conditions, and with available resources". It takes time and effort, often requiring students to navigate a complex web of institutional protocols and informal practices to ensure their inclusion. This invisible work, performed daily and nightly by SWDs, reveals the gap between policy intentions and actual practices on the ground. [22]

The institutional staff who support students also engage in significant work to implement disability inclusion policies, often negotiating institutional politics and ableist structures. AHMED (2012) referred to this as diversity work, which involves both the emotional and practical work of enacting institutional goals related to diversity and inclusion. In the Nigerian higher education, staff such as those in the Deaf Support Centre or resource personnel for visually impaired students are key actors in this diversity work. However, this work is often fraught with challenges, as institutional resources and support systems are inadequate for effectively meeting students' needs. [23]

During my fieldwork, I volunteered as a resource person for students with visual impairments, taking on the role of converting learning materials into accessible formats. Within this role, I understood students' struggle to access the curriculum and the impact of a lack of adequate support staff or accessible resources as students were left to perform much of the policy work themselves. My involvement in this work gave me firsthand insight into the institutional disjunctures that persist despite well-meaning inclusion policies. It also enabled me to collaborate with students and staff in a more participatory and reflexive

manner, moving beyond mere observation to active engagement in the everyday work of inclusion. [24]

By analysing the *work* of both students and staff, I aimed to reveal how inclusion is not simply a matter of policy enactment but a process that requires constant negotiation and adaptation. The students' efforts to navigate the institutional landscape and the staff's attempts to implement policy are often overlooked forms of policy work. Yet, they are essential to understanding how disability inclusion is organised within the university. Through this lens, I could draw a cartography of how the constellation of history, texts, linearity of time, and social relations in built spaces work together to determine who gets what from the university system. I will now turn to how I have addressed reflexivity in this research. [25]

3. Doing Reflexivity in IE

IE challenges researchers to move beyond claims of objectivity and neutrality, as knowledge is always situated, socially and reflexively organised (SMITH, 2005). In this context, reflexivity requires scholars to critically examine their own positions and how their personal, political, and intellectual biographies shape their research. However, reflexivity in qualitative research has suffered excessive familiarity as a term, especially since when GEERTZ (1988) declared that the epistemological foundations of the field "have been shaken by a general loss of faith in received stories about the nature of representation" (p.135). This is because the interactional and constructional nature of qualitative research has "made the impact of the researcher more evident and can be experienced in existential ways" (BREUER, MRUCK & ROTH, 2002, §3). In response to this, the last three decades of ethnographic research have witnessed what some scholars have earlier described as the "proliferative reflexivity of the self that has sprouted like mushrooms in the face of the crisis of representation" (PATAI, 1994, p.64). [26]

This is why RILEY, SCHOUTEN and CAHILL (2003) described reflexivity as a new construction of (a past) reality that is contested, contradictory and fragmented. It is a process where the researcher "treads a cliff edge of questioning the author's voice through an excessive self-analysis, which sometimes might be at the expense of attending to the research participants" (FINLAY, 2002, p.532). As HERTZ (1997) also noted, the burden placed on every reflexive ethnographer is not to "report facts or truths but actively construct interpretations of his or her experiences in the field and then question how those interpretations came about" (p.viii). Therefore, reflexivity is both epistemological—how the social is known—and methodological, i.e., how research is conducted to obtain this knowledge about the social. It creates possibilities to analyse "the complexity of the data, avoiding the suggestion that there is a simple fit between the social world under scrutiny and the ethnographic representation of it" (NENCEL, 2014, p.76). However, its proliferation within the qualitative tradition has made it a self-centred, narcissistic process (MATON, 2003), sometimes undermining the conditions necessary for emancipatory research (KEMMIS, 1995). [27]

The question of what reflexivity means is particularly complex and ambiguously contested for *academic homecomers* like me — researchers educated in the global North who return to research in the global South (ORIOLA & HAGGERTY, 2012). For such researchers, reflexivity must account for the intersections of colonial power of the institutions they represent, privileges, and capital that influence our engagements with local communities in the periphery without recreating the abusive research relationship they have been subjected to (SMITH L., 2013). In this section, I outline this "situated" approach to reflexivity in a postcolonial context, which encompasses biographical, epistemic, analytical and transformational dimensions, and I reflect on how these shaped my work with disabled students in a Nigerian university. [28]

3.1 Biographical reflexivity

Biographical reflexivity involves reflecting on how researchers' personal experiences and background inform their approach to the research, commonly referred to as positionalities. The researcher enters the field with certain degrees of power and privilege, which can shape both the research process and the relationship with participants. SMITH (2005) maintained that researchers must, therefore, recognise the authority of participants as expert knowers of their everyday realities. While this allows the researcher to stop focusing on the self, the researcher's positionality—whether as an insider, outsider or both—still inevitably influences the dynamics of power within the research encounter. [29]

As a researcher returning to my undergraduate institution in Nigeria, I entered the field with significant cultural and institutional capital. I had personal connections with colleagues, friends, and academic mentors, which gave me access to certain networks and allowed me to navigate the university's structures with relative ease, even though this could have worked against me. However, my position as both an insider and outsider fluctuated throughout the research process, highlighting the fluidity of these identities (GIWA, 2015). At times, I was seen as an insider, particularly when engaging with staff and students who were familiar with my background. In other moments, I was perceived as an outsider, especially when my position as a PhD researcher from a UK institution led participants to view me as disconnected from local realities. [30]

This insider-outsider dichotomy is not fixed but dynamic and requires constant negotiation, particularly when engaging with SWDs. As a non-disabled researcher, I recognised my own complicity in ableist structures and sought to interrogate my privileges in the context of higher education. At the same time, my prior experiences teaching and supporting SWDs allowed me to build credibility with participants, as I could relate to some of the challenges they faced. Drawing on the framework of credibility and approachability (MAYORGA-GALLO & HORDGE-FREEMAN, 2017), I reflected on how my perceived authority influenced access to the field and shaped participants' responses. My credibility among students was further put to test when I volunteered as a support staff member, helping prepare materials for students with visual impairments. This dual role as both researcher and support worker allowed me to engage with

participants more deeply, fostering a sense of trust and collaboration. This was described by FINLAY (2005, p.271) as the "*merging-with* layer of the reflexive embodied empathy". FINLAY argued that this involves a "reciprocal insertion and intertwining of others in oneself and of one in them" (ibid). Through this, the researcher-researched relationship demonstrates an intersubjective corporeal commonality that does not foreclose the possibility of empathy and how, in turn, empathy enables understanding of the Other and self-understanding (RILEY et al., 2003). I now turn to why a textually rendered biographical reflexivity is insufficient. [31]

3.2 Epistemic reflexivity

Epistemic reflexivity goes beyond biographical reflection to critically examine how the structures of knowledge production shape the research process. BOURDIEU and WACQUANT (1992 [1988]) with the concept of "epistemic reflexivity" called on researchers to reflect on the intellectual fields in which they are embedded, recognising how disciplinary norms and practices influence their work. In the context of this study, epistemic reflexivity required me to reflect on how my training in Western academic institutions shaped my understanding of disability inclusion and influenced the framing of my research. [32]

Therefore, epistemic reflexivity doesn't mean just "turning back" to unveil the individual blind spots of the researcher but also unearth the epistemological unconsciousness of the discipline and the epistemic violence conducted in the name of the discipline. As argued by MATON (2003), engaging in epistemic reflexivity requires that the researcher asks, "how can one overcome the gravitational effects of the intellectual field?" (p.57). Depending on the social positioning of the researcher, these reflections could be sociological, individualistic and even narcissistic in some sense to capture what MATON described as "enacted reflexivity" (p.54), which typically addresses the *social relation of knowledge* rather than its epistemic relation. [33]

Before encountering IE, my knowledge of disability inclusion was shaped by policy texts and the dominant discourse of inclusion as a technical issue—solvable by removing barriers and providing accommodations. This "*ideological way of knowing*" (SMITH, 1990, p.37) reinforced a medicalised view of disability, positioning disabled individuals as problems to be fixed. Through IE, I shifted to an *experiential way of knowing,* recognising that policy texts are not neutral instruments but conduits of power that perpetuate exclusionary practices. This shift required me to centre the experiences of SWDs as the primary source of knowledge, allowing me to map how institutional structures organise their lives. But as I have highlighted in the previous section, taking the representational validity of the experiential account as a window to the social is problematic as experiences are anchored in discourse. Ethnographic researchers are required to interrogate how their participants are also imbricated in the discursive practice of disability inclusion, where they often use the same narrative tropes and devices in the literature to make their voices heard and credible. [34]

Furthermore, I had to question my own position within the geopolitical matrix of power, acknowledging how my Western academic background afforded me certain privileges in the field. As GROSFOGUEL (2011) noted, Western academia often erases the subjectivity of the researcher, promoting the myth of *universal knowledge*. By engaging in epistemic reflexivity, I sought to deconstruct the *geo-political and bio-political locations* that shaped my perspective, ensuring that the voices of disabled students were not overshadowed by my positionality and interests. [35]

I engaged with the analysis of my research from a decolonial praxis (MIGNOLO & WALSH, 2018, p.45) perspective, as it allows me to take cognisance of the ideological/symbolic strategies as well as the colonial/racist culture of the modern/colonial world, referred to in IE as the extra-local ruling relations or bifurcation of consciousness. MIGNOLO (2002) maintained that the consequence of coloniality of power allows for differentiation, classification and hierarchisation of the colonised/colonisers. This domination by colonial differentiation has morphed, as noted by BENDIX (2018), under different global designs, such as Christianisation, civilising missions, post-WWII development, neoliberalism, globalisation and internationalisation. [36]

I also see these structures as the "colonial matrix of power" (MIGNOLO & WALSH, 2018, p.4), extra-locally coordinating the implementation of inclusive systems of higher education around the world, particularly in Nigeria. Based on the premise that the policies for higher education in the colonies in West Africa gave the ideological justification that the historically so-called feebleminded and handicapped (TOMLINSON, 2017) cannot function in the scheme of the exploitative use of the university. They were, therefore, excluded from the thinking and planning of higher education in the colonies.[1] As noted by AHMED (2019), the university has a "history of use" (p.165), a history of the people it normally houses and this history could be seen through the "traces" left behind by the people and ideas it was built for. This is why I proposed an institutional ethnography that is "decolonial" by first acknowledging that actualities are embedded in the colonial matrix of power and, therefore, taking a reflexive approach to understanding how these trans-local conditions of coloniality coordinate social relations. A dialogue between IE and decolonial theories in the study provides a map for doing a sociology that seeks to delink from the existing hegemonic ways of doing research and a framework to conduct a reflexive and relational study that shifts the locus of enunciation to the marginalised and Othered identities in the Nigerian higher education space. [37]

1 For a full critique of the economic rationales in the development of higher education in Nigeria, see AHMED (1989).

3.3 Analytical reflexivity

Analytical reflexivity focuses on the researcher's role in interpreting and analysing data, ensuring that the voices of participants are represented authentically rather than subsumed under dominant discourses. WALBY (2013) cautioned that IE researchers risk reproducing *symbolic violence* by misrepresenting the experiences of marginalised groups through their own interpretive frameworks and the danger of representation. To mitigate this risk, I employed the listening guide (GILLIGAN, 2015; SPRINGMANN, DAPHNA-TEKOAH, HAREL, HENDRICH & KIEGELMANN, 2025), a voice-centred method of analysis designed to foreground participants' narratives without reducing them to researcher-defined categories. [38]

The listening guide (LG) allowed me to engage in a multi-layered analysis, listening not only for the content of participants' stories but also for the *contrapuntal voices*—the multiple, sometimes contradictory, perspectives present in their narratives. This approach aligned with IE's commitment to privileging the voice of the participant while mapping how institutional processes shape their experiences. In analysing the interviews with SWDs, I reflected on my own reactions to the data, ensuring that my interpretations did not overshadow the participants' voices. By documenting my reflections and analytical memos, I could maintain transparency in the data analysis process, making explicit how my own subjectivities influenced the interpretation of the findings. [39]

LG provides an alternative to traditional coding data analysis methods, as it is a relational voice-centred method which allows qualitative researchers to listen and hear previously unnoticed and underappreciated voices (PETROVIC, LORDLY, BRIGHAM & DELANEY, 2015). LG, developed by GILLIGAN and colleagues, was used to address the concern that women's voices, in particular, have not been noticeable or adequately represented in research (GILLIGAN, 2015). It departs from the conventional method of analysis by delaying or eliminating the reduction of complex data by fitting people into researcher-defined theoretical paradigms (MAUTHNER, 1999) or predetermined categories of data quantification (SORSOLI & TOLMAN, 2008). Scholars have used LG mostly in research studies that seek to amplify voices of people who are otherwise suppressed in society. It has also been a useful heuristic device to address reflexivity and the role of the researcher in data analysis (DOUCET 2018a; DOUCET & MAUTHNER, 2008; GILLIGAN, 2015). [40]

There has been a range of different and modified uses of LG, with researchers noting how time-consuming LG is as it requires about four to five readings of the transcripts. Some researchers have used it for analysing interview and focus group transcripts with women with post-partum depression (MAUTHNER, 1999); combatant women at the war front (HAREL-SHALEV & DAPHNA-TEKOAH, 2021); workplace transitions (BALAN, 2005); family life (HUTTON & LYSTOR, 2020); single fathers who "mother" (DOUCET, 2018b). Others have used it to analyse reflective essays of dietetics students in the university (PETROVIC et al., 2015); and the silenced voice in literacy (WOODCOCK, 2016). It could be used

when a text or transcript contains a first-person voice or where a first-person voice might be expected (GILLIGAN, 2015). The first element of LG that addresses the reflexivity of the researcher is listening for the plot. This is one of four steps in conducting a listening guide analysis, which also includes: constructing the I-poems, listening for contrapuntal voices, and composing and analysing (ibid., see also GILLIGAN & EDDY, 2017; PETROVIC et al., 2015). [41]

3.4 Listening for the Plot

The first reading is to listen for the plot, including protagonists being described by participants. It helps the researcher address the question of who is there. Who and what is missing? Are there repeated words, emotional hot spots, gaps and striking metaphors? (GILLIGAN, 2015). This reading also involves noting the researcher's reactions to the plot, or what WALBY (2013, p.146) referred to as "reflexive presencing of the researcher". As pointed out by GILLIGAN (2015), it is one of the ways LG prompts the researcher to listen to his or her own voice, distinguish it from that of the participants, to prevent "ventriloquising through others or voicing over their voices" (p.71) when writing up. While analysing Sophia's transcript (a visually impaired student) in my study, the first reading oriented me to the who, what, where, when, and why of what is happening. Then, how do I see myself in the text, my background, history and experiences in relation to the person interviewed? I had to "attend to (my) own responses to the narratives by explicitly bringing (my) own subjectivities into the process of interpretation" by writing a reflexive note on the transcript and the relationships I have with some of the issues and plots in the narratives (GILLIGAN, SPENCER, WEINBERG & BERTSCH, 2003, p.160). These were written as analytical memos attached to each case in Nvivo and used to inform the analysis and writing. [42]

3.5 Transformational reflexivity

Transformational reflexivity builds on biographical, epistemic, and analytical reflexivity but pushes researchers to move beyond reflection and critique toward facilitating tangible social change. It emphasises the researcher's active engagement with participants in generating collective actions that challenge and reshape institutional structures. I approached transformational reflexivity in this study by examining how SWDs at FUA navigated and negotiated institutional transformation for inclusion. Through my reflections on their "fixing work"—the strategic actions and negotiations SWDs undertake to challenge institutional barriers—I recognised the need to go beyond mapping their everyday struggles. Instead, I sought to actively engage in a sociological intervention (TOURAINE,1981 [1978]) that could empower these students and promote a shift in institutional practices. [43]

One key aspect of transformational reflexivity involved examining the textually mediated efforts of SWDs and their student unions in advocating for disability accommodation and inclusion. These students' organising efforts illustrated a form of resistance to the "ruling relations" (SMITH, 2005, p.13) embedded in the university's policies and structures, which often perpetuated exclusion. In

analysing these actions, I shifted from understanding power merely as *discursive*—as embedded in texts and institutional frameworks—to recognising it as *productive*—as something that students could harness to transform their everyday realities. This recognition of the transformative potential of SWDs' actions prompted me to analyse their collective efforts, focusing on how they organised their unions, negotiated with university authorities, and navigated cultural differences within disability clusters. [44]

To deepen my engagement with transformational reflexivity, I drew on the sociological intervention (SI) framework developed by TOURAINE (1981 [1978]) alongside the participatory methodologies of BOAL (2000 [1974) and FREIRE (2000 [1970]). These approaches emphasise the role of collective dialogue and action in transforming oppressive social systems. In particular, Freire's concept of conscientisation as a means to transformative action, which involves empowering marginalised groups to challenge and reshape the conditions of their oppression, resonated with my research at the university. I facilitated a participatory dialogue between SWDs and university stakeholders, focusing on the exclusion of disabled students from sports—a critical area where institutional policies failed to accommodate SWDs' needs. [45]

This intervention took the form of a *workshop*, an organised space for dialogue where SWDs could articulate their concerns directly to university authorities. By creating this platform, I supported the process by which students could realise their potential to effect change within the university. Through this intervention, SWDs became active participants in the conversation on disability inclusion rather than passive policy subjects. My role as a sociologist was not simply to observe and report but to facilitate an encounter between students and the university administrators, sports directors, and disability advocacy representatives so that the students themselves could lead on the conversation for institutional change. [46]

3.6 A sociology of transformative actions

TOURAINE's (1981 [1978]) action sociology asserts that the sociologist must not only study structures but also engage with the social movements and conflicts that drive change, which builds on the work of many decolonial researchers on research that transforms people's everyday realities (BORDA, 1979; FREIRE, 2000 [1970]; SMITH L., 2013). He indicated that society is not merely composed of fixed systems but of dynamic processes shaped by social relations, struggles, and the actions of individuals. In line with this, I recognised that the micropolitics of social change at FUA involved resistance, instabilities, and the ongoing negotiation of power between SWDs and institutional authorities. The fixing work SWDs were engaged in, from negotiating for more interpreters to demanding better sports inclusion, demonstrated their conscious efforts to challenge the existing ruling relations and create space for themselves within the university. [47]

As a sociologist, my responsibility was to support these struggles by providing tools for self-analysis and empowering the students to harness the potential of their collective actions. TOURAINE's (1981 [1978]) sociological intervention

methodology guided me in facilitating a dialogic encounter between SWDs and university authorities, allowing the students to confront the institutional barriers they faced. This intervention was not merely about resolving conflicts, as in TOURAINE's (1981 [1978]) conceptualisation of SI, but about creating a space where students could articulate their experiences, propose solutions, and begin the process of transforming their reality. [48]

The success of this intervention was not only in raising awareness of the exclusion of SWDs from sports but also in enabling a broader dialogue about disability inclusion at FUA. By facilitating this meeting, I contributed to the empowerment of SWDs with how things are put together, helping them to shift from spectators to active *spec-actors* (BOAL, 2000 [1974], p.xxi)—participants who actively engage in reshaping their social environments. This process of sociological intervention aligns with TOURAINE's (1981 [1978]) call for a sociology that supports actors in their struggles for social evolution, and it also reflects FREIRE's (2000 [1970]) emphasis on dialogue as a tool for liberation. [49]

In this study, my engagement with SWDs was not limited to mapping their struggles but extended to facilitating a process through which they could collectively address these struggles and push for institutional change. By organising the workshop and enabling students to articulate their demands for sports inclusion, I helped bridge the gap between knowledge production and its impact on social transformation. This approach to transformational reflexivity, which needs further development, will redefine the role of institutional ethnographers. Traditionally, IE has been described as a *sociology for people*—a methodology that reveals how institutional processes govern the everyday lives of people (SMITH, 2005). Based on my engagement with sociological intervention, I am proposing a sociology *with* people which works with marginalised groups in not only understanding how the colonial matrix of power relations shapes their everyday lives but also in actively resisting and reshaping those power structures. Transformational reflexivity, then, offers a way for IE[2] to move beyond critique toward a more participatory and emancipatory form of research that supports collective struggles for social justice. [50]

2 While this is offered as a distinctive contribution to the development of IE on the question of *where do we go from here*? (VAUGHAN & LUKEN, 2023) to expand the understanding of social and ruling relations, I also risk the possibility of misrepresenting what IE stands for or seeks to address as developed by SMITH (2005). However, in this paper I engaged with decolonial critiques of traditional ethnographic approaches and considered how reflexivity within IE can open spaces for marginalised communities whose actualities are "colonial" to interpret and act upon their social realities in ways they find meaningful. This perspective does not contradict the foundational aims of IE but rather extends its application in line with decolonial and critical disability studies.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have demonstrated, even though schematic, the need for an embedded approach to how reflexivity is done in ethnographic research to preserve the voices of historically marginalised people, drawing on my experience of working with disabled students in the post-colonial context of Nigerian higher education. By interrogating the foundations of IE as a method of inquiry, this article has proposed a *decolonial institutional ethnography* that requires biographical, epistemic, analytical and transformational reflexivity. Such an approach moves IE from being a "sociology for people" (SMITH, 2005) to a sociology *with* people, thus allowing participants to be active agents in not only understanding the institutional processes that govern their everyday lives but also active in the transformation of that process. [51]

The need for decolonial reflexivity in IE became particularly evident through my engagement with SWDs at the university. I argue that the dialogue between IE and decolonial theories, a decolonial turn in IE inspired by Latin American and postcolonial theories, challenges the hegemonic forms of knowledge production that have historically silenced the voices of the subalterns. By doing so, it acknowledges the colonial matrix of power that continues to shape higher education policies globally, particularly in Nigeria and the philosophical underpinnings of IE as a method of inquiry. Finally, the use of analytical reflexivity and transformational reflex added a layer of complexity to the dominant discussion of reflexivity in qualitative research, specifically through the listening guide, ensuring that the voices of disabled students were amplified rather than subsumed under dominant institutional discourses or thematisation of qualitative data. This aligns with IE's broader goal of mapping the social relations that govern lived experiences while offering a path forward for conducting ethically and politically engaged research that not only seeks to understand but also aims to transform the realities of marginalised communities. [52]

References

Ahmed, Ajuji (1989). The asquith tradition, the ashby reform, and the development of higher education in Nigeria. *Minerva*, *27*, 1-20.

Ahmed, Sara (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, Sara (2019). *What's the use?: On the uses of use*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Balan, B. Nicole (2005). Multiple voices and methods: Listening to women who are in workplace transition. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 4*(4), 63-86, https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/ijqm/index.php/IJQM/article/view/4433 [Accessed: November 11, 2024].

Bendix, Daniel (2018). *Global development and colonial power: German development policy at home and abroad*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Benhabib, Seyla (1995). Feminism and postmodernism: An uneasy alliance. In Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell & Nancy Fraser (Eds.), *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp.17-34). New York, NY: Routledge.

Boal, Augusto (2000 [1974]). *Theatre of the oppressed* (transl. by C.A. McBride). London: Pluto Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre & Wacquant, Loic J.D. (1992 [1988]). *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (transl. by L.J.D. Wacquant). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Borda, Orlando Fals (1979). Investigating reality in order to transform it: The Colombian experience. *Dialectical Anthropology*, *4*, 33-55.

Breuer, Franz; Mruck, Katja & Roth, Wolff-Michael (2002). Subjectivity and reflexivity: An introduction. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *3*(3), Art. 9, https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-3.3.822 [Accessed: February 15, 2025].

Burawoy, Michael (1998). The extended case method. *Sociological Theory*, *16*(1), 4-33.

Butler, Judith (1995). Contingent foundations. In Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell & Nancy Fraser (Eds.), *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp.35-57). New York, NY: Routledge.

Campbell, Marie (1998). Institutional ethnography and experience as data. *Qualitative Sociology, 21*(1), 55-73.

Campbell, Marie & Gregor, Frances (2002). *Mapping social relations: A primer in doing institutional ethnography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

DeVault, Marjorie L. & McCoy, Liza (2006). Institutional ethnography: Using interviews to investigate ruling relations. In Dorothy E. Smith (Ed.), *Institutional ethnography as practice* (pp.15-44). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Deveau, J. Louis (2008). Examining the institutional ethnographer's toolkit. *Socialist Studies / Études Socialistes*, *4*(2), 1-19, https://doi.org/10.18740/S4F60Z [Accessed: February 18, 2025].

Deveau, J. Louis (2014). Using institutional ethnography's ideological circle to portray how textually mediated disability discourse paralysed a Supreme Court of Canada ruling. *Culture and Organization*, *22*(4), 311-329.

Doucet, Andrea (2018a). Revisiting and remaking the listening guide: An ecological and ontological narrativity approach to analyzing fathering narratives. In Áine M. Humble & M. Elise Radina (Eds.), *How qualitative data analysis happens: Moving beyond "themes emerged"* (pp.80-94). New York, NY: Routledge.

Doucet, Andrea (2018b). *Do men mother?.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Doucet, Andrea & Mauthner, Natasha. S. (2008). What can be known and how? Narrated subjects and the listening guide. *Qualitative Research*, *8*(3), 399-409.

Finlay, Linda (2002). "Outing" the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Researcher*, *12*(4), 531-545.

Finlay, Linda (2005). "Reflexive embodied empathy": A phenomenology of participant-researcher intersubjectivity. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, *33*(4), 271-292.

Freire, Paulo (2000 [1970]). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (transl. by M.B. Ramos). New York, NY: Continuum.

Garfinkel, Harold (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Geertz, Clifford (1988). *Works and lives: The anthropologist as author*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Geertz, Clifford (1996). *After the fact: Two countries, four decades, one anthropologist*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, Carol (2015). The listening guide method of psychological inquiry [Editorial]. *Qualitative Psychology, 2*(1), 69-77.

Gilligan, Carol & Eddy, Jessica (2017). Listening as a path to psychological discovery: An introduction to the listening guide. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 6*(2), 76-81, https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-017-0335-3 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Gilligan, Carol; Spencer, Renée; Weinberg, Martha K. & Bertsch, Tatiana (2003). On the listening guide: A voice-centered relational method. In Paul M. Camic, Jean E. Rhodes & Lucy Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design* (pp.157-172). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Giwa, Aisha (2015), Insider/outsider isues for development researchers from the Global South. *Geography Compass*, *9*(6), 316-326.

Griffith, Alison & Smith, Dorothy E. (2004). *Mothering for schooling.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Griffith, Alison & Smith, Dorothy E. (2014). Introduction. In Alison Griffith & Dorothy E. Smith (Eds.), *Under new public management: Institutional ethnographies of changing front-line work* (pp 3-21). Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Grosfoguel, Ramón (2011). Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality. *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, *1*(1), https://doi.org/10.5070/T411000004 [Accessed: February 19, 2025].

Harel-Shalev, Ayelet & Daphna-Tekoah, Shayna (2021). Breaking the binaries in research—the listening guide. *Qualitative Psychology*, *8*(2), 211-223.

Hertz, Rosanna (1997). Introduction: Reflexivity and voice. In Rosanna Hertz (Eds.), *Reflexivity & voice* (pp.vii-xviii). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hollway, Wendy, & Jefferson, Tony (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. London: Sage.

Hutton, Margaret & Lystor, Clare (2020). The listening guide: Voice-centred-relational analysis of private subjectivities. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *24*(1), 14-31.

Isiaka, Abass B. (2024). "This space is not built for people like us": An institutional ethnography of the everyday work of students with disabilities in Nigerian universities. *Doctoral dissertation*, *education*, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England, https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/id/eprint/95849 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Kemmis, Stephen (1995). Emancipatory aspirations in a postmodern era. *Curriculum Studies*, *3*(2), 133-167, https://doi.org/10.1080/0965975950030203 [Accessed: February 11, 2025].

Kuhn, Thomas S. (1970 [1962]). *The structure of scientific revolutions.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Maton, Karl (2003). Reflexivity, relationism, & research: Pierre Bourdieu and the epistemic conditions of social scientific knowledge. *Space and Culture*, *6*(1), 52-65.

Mayorga-Gallo, Sarah & Hordge-Freeman, Elizabeth (2017). Between marginality and privilege: Gaining access and navigating the field in multiethnic settings. *Qualitative Research*, *17*(4), 377-394, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116672915 [Accessed: February 20, 2025].

Mauthner, S. Natasha (1999). "Feeling low and feeling really bad about feeling low": Women's experiences of motherhood and postpartum depression. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, *40*(2), 143-161.

Mignolo, Walter D. (2002). The geopolitics of knowledge and the colonial difference. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *101*(1), 57-96.

Mignolo, Walter D. & Walsh, Catherine E. (2018). *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Murray, Órla Meadhbh (2019). Doing feminist text-focused institutional ethnography in UK universities. *Doctoral dissertation*, Sociology, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland. https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/35719/Murray2019.pdf [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Nencel, Lorraine (2014). Situating reflexivity: Voices, positionalities, and representations in feminist ethnographic texts. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *43*(Special Issue), 75-83.

Ng, Stella; Stooke, Rosamund; Regan, Sandra; Hibbert, Kathryn; Schryer, Catherine; Phelan, Sheila & Lingard, Lorelei (2013). An institutional ethnography inquiry of health care work in special education: A research protocol. *International Journal of Integrated Care, 13*(33), https://doi.org/10.5334/ijic.1052 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Oriola, Temitope & Haggerty, Kevin D. (2012). The ambivalent insider/outsider status of academic "homecomers": Observations on identity and field research in the Nigerian Delta. *Sociology, 46*(3), 540-548.

Patai, Daphne (1994). (Response) When method becomes power. In Andrew Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and method* (pp.61-73). New York, NY: Routledge.

Petrovic, Sanja; Lordly, Daphne; Brigham, Susan & Delaney, Mary (2015). Learning to listen: An analysis of applying the listening guide to reflection papers. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *14*(5), 1-11, https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621402 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Reid, Jackie & Russell, Louise (2018). *Perspectives on and from institutional ethnography*. Bingley: Emerald.

Riley, Sarah; Schouten, Wendy & Cahill, Sharon (2003). Exploring the dynamics of subjectivity and power between researcher and researched. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *4*(2), Art. 40, https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-4.2.713 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Scott, Joan W. (1991). The evidence of experience. *Critical Inquiry*, *17*(4), 773-797.

Smith, Dorothy E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, Dorothy E. (1990). *The conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, Dorothy E. (1999). *Writing the social: Critique, theory, and investigations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Smith, Dorothy E. (2005). *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for people*. Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira.

Smith, Dorothy E. (2006). *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Smith, George W. (1990). Political activist as ethnographer. *Social Problems*, *37*(4), 629-648.

Smith, Linda T. (2013). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Sorsoli, Linda & Tolman, Deborah L. (2008). Hearing voices: Listening for multiplicity and movement. In Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber & Patricia Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp.495-515). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Springmann, Marie-Luise; Daphna-Tekoah, Shir; Harel, Ayelet; Hendrich, Béatrice & Kiegelmann, Mechthild (2025). Not lost in translation: Multi-perspective collaborative analysis with the listening guide, illustrated by a case of a woman in combat. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *26*(1), Art 11, https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-26.1.4222 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Tomlinson, Sally (2017). *A sociology of special and inclusive education: Exploring the manufacture of inability.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Touraine, Alain (1981 [1978]). *The voice and the eye: An analysis of social movements* (transl. by A. Duff). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vangkilde, Kasper T. & Sausdal, David B. (2016). Overponderabilia: Overcoming overthinking when studying "ourselves". *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 17*(2), Art. 28, https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-17.2.2497 [Accessed: November 8, 2024].

Vaughan, Suzanne & Luken, Paul C. (2023). Introduction: Where do we go from here?. In Suzanne Vaughan & Paul C. Luken (Eds.), *Critical commentary on institutional ethnography* (pp.1-7). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Walby, Kevin (2007). On the social relations of research: A critical assessment of institutional ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *13*(7), 1008-1030.

Walby, Kevin (2013). Institutional ethnography and data analysis: Making sense of data dialogues. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *16*(2), 141-154.

Wolcott, Harry F. (1999). *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira.

Woodcock, Christine (2016). The listening guide: A how-to approach on ways to promote educational democracy. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 15*(1), 1-10, https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916677594 [Accessed: February 17, 2025].

Author

Abass B. ISIAKA is a senior research associate in widening participation at the Centre for Higher Education Research Practice Policy and Scholarship (CHERPPS) at the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom. He is also an academic associate at the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia. He is interested in the sociology of inequalities, policy research and evaluation, decoloniality, disability and institutional ethnography.

Contact:

Dr Abass B. Isiaka

Centre for Higher Education Research Practice Policy and Scholarship (CHERPPS)
University of East Anglia, Norwich Research Park
NR4 7TJ, Norwich, United Kingdom United Kingdom

E-mail: a.isiaka@uea.ac.uk
URL: https://research-portal.uea.ac.uk/en/persons/abass-bolaji-isiaka

Citation

Isiaka, Abass B. (2025). Doing sociology *with* people: Disability, coloniality and reflexivity in institutional ethnography [52 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *26*(2), Art. 7, https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-26.2.4308.