



Reply

Reply to Grove et al. (2025). Comment on “Grace et al. (2024). Expanding Possibilities for Inclusive Research: Learning from People with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities and Decolonising Research. *Social Sciences* 13: 37”

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Our paper (Grace et al. 2024) developed from our sharing of early thoughts on finding a way for people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities to belong in research (de Haas et al. 2022). Taking inspiration from the call from O'Brien (2022) to reflect on how researchers can move forward with inclusive research on ‘a road less well-travelled’, we set out to share aspects of our ongoing thinking from our methodological and conceptual work, using illustrative examples from the doctoral researchers among us as part of this. The paper therefore provided only brief descriptions of the initial fieldwork and planned future work which, as the authors of the Comment have noted, did not give us sufficient space to provide a full blueprint and comprehensive justification of the methods used. Providing such at this early stage was not our intention.

The lack of some aspects of detail in our paper appears to have led to some critical misreading of the methods, including significant misapprehensions about how key ethical issues were approached in Jo’s PhD research. Rather than respond with a methods/empirical paper, we invite interested readers to read Joanna Grace’s (2025) PhD thesis, which addresses the points raised fully. We use this reply just to address three key misunderstandings in the Comment which are central to the authors’ argument. Firstly, much of the critique is based on the idea that Jo as researcher used ethnography and flaws in the application of ethnography. However, as we explained (p. 3), while in part inspired by sensory and autistic ethnography, Jo employed participant observation, not ethnography. She was engaged in an ongoing, reflexive process of embodied, multisensory attending but not with the ethnographic intention of building a narrative account of culture. Secondly, related to potential risks of infection and contamination, the school concerned follows strict hygiene and infection-control procedures with regular handwashing, which Jo followed while on site. Thirdly, Jo was never operating in isolation. She worked by fitting into class activities supported by staff and in dialogue with the young people’s parents who consented to the use of photos and gave input into what and how the young people were communicating.

We thank the authors of the Comment for highlighting areas that may have been misconstrued by other readers in this new and important field of research in which there is little certainty. We concur with them that there needs to be ongoing discussion about the tensions regarding matters such as the use of images of people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and decolonisation theory. Our view is that it is not ‘proof’ of anything that we need on this road less well-travelled, but careful steps forward that are shared widely to facilitate dialogue.



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