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Conducting ethnographic research in male-dominated environments: Reflections of a(n) (emotional) female researcher

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Abstract
This article contributes to the field of qualitative research by shining a light on the additional and invisible work demanded of female ethnographers undertaking research in male-dominated spaces. It draws on an 18-month ethnographic study exploring the potential of sport and physical activity as a tool to support the transition of male veterans from the military into civilian life. Previous literature has explored the experiences of female ethnographers, hinting at some of this additional necessary work. This study builds upon this, to highlight the invisible and additional management processes required of female ethnographers in male-dominated spaces, including the management of events, managing image and gender performance and the multi-layered demands of managing emotions. This article argues that a greater degree of effort and labour is demanded of female ethnographers, which should be acknowledged in academic writing alongside the provision of support when entering male-dominated research spaces.

Keywords
ethnography, gender, military, male-dominated environments, gender differences, unforeseen events, managing

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Introduction

In this article, I (first author) reflect upon the experiences I faced as a first-time female ethnographer undertaking ethnographic research in a male-dominated environment, addressing gender as cisgender. The initial aim of this study was to understand how a sport and physical activity programme can support veterans leaving the military, attending to mental health, social isolation and addiction. However, as I became increasingly immersed in the programme, I recognised gender as a growing focus. I found myself using a gendered lens to understand and explain the social situations I experienced, and as a tool to negotiate the research process as a first-time female ethnographer. Responding to recent calls in this journal to recognise emotion in research, embrace the hidden ethnography, and encourage reflexive accounts (Haddow, 2021), this article identifies and examines the additional management processes, in relation to the self and the research environment, female ethnographers in male-dominated spaces are required to undertake to navigate the flexibility and immersion of ethnography. We argue that women are often required to engage in a greater amount of labour and effort in the ethnographic research process to ensure it is undertaken safely and successfully from their perspective. Literature examining ethnography in relation to gender and reflexivity will be reviewed before presenting the research context and methodology. Through a gendered lens the empirical sections of this article will focus on the 'managing' I undertook when in the field, concentrating on gender and image management (Butler, 1999), managing unforeseen events (Green et al., 2017), and emotion management (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). The article concludes with a clear outline of the empirical, methodological and practical contributions to the field of qualitative research, and suggestions for future study.

Ethnography demands embeddedness, placing the researcher at the heart of data collection, fully immersed and central to the creation of the ethnographic narrative (Olive et al., 2016). However, an important skill of an ethnographer is to remain in the background and strike a balance between involvement and detachment (Bowles et al., 2021; Fine and Hancock, 2017). Reflexivity is a useful tool in maintaining this fine balance, in which ethnographers engage in a process of critical reflection, acknowledging the links between their biographies, assumptions, and research approaches, and become increasingly aware of their position in the field and how this can influence the research setting (Pringle and Thorpe, 2017; Davies, 1999). For example, it has been suggested that shared identity characteristics between the researcher and research participants may facilitate the processes of gaining trust, access, and establishing and maintaining a rapport, with some researchers only ever being able to achieve superficial acceptance because of identity differences (Gurney, 1985; Williams et al., 2021). However, this notion has been challenged as individuals can connect with many different intersecting identities and societal groups and, considering race, gender, age and class, it is challenging for an ethnographer to easily align themselves across all these features (Alcoff, 1991; Chadderton, 2012). In the published literature the identity markers and status relations of the researcher and the researched in ethnographic fieldwork is receiving more attention (Wheaton, 2002; Williams et al., 2021), but it has also been raised that, in male-dominated spaces, there is little acknowledgement or visibility of the researchers' gendered identity in which 'maleness passes unquestioned' (Woodward, 2008, p. 548).

Gottdiener (2005, p. 81) defines male-dominated environments as 'places where traditionally men have congregated more commonly than women and where males are at a distinct advantage regarding the deployment of power'. Here, 'deployment of power' refers to 'typical dominant/subordinate social roles' acted out by men and women in spaces such as bars, sports stadiums and betting shops, that facilitate the expression of male biased activities (Cassidy, 2014; Gottdiener, 2005, p. 81). In environments such as these, Woodward (2008) encourages the disruption of gender as this has the potential to promote greater reflection on the differentiated identities of the researcher and participants.

Much of the literature on ethnographic fieldwork assumes the researcher is 'Anyman' ignoring the possible influences of gender (Gurney, 1985). It would be foolish to ignore this lacuna and the potential dangers it presents for female researchers immersed in male-dominated fieldwork spaces (Palmer, 2010). According to West and Zimmerman (1987), gender is an outcome of social practice and interaction where individuals perform gender in social contexts with certain situations perpetuating behaviours that are linked to ways of being male or female. Gurney (1991) proposes that the influence of gender is dependent on time spent in the field, due to the different participant relationships that are established. This suggests that gender is an unimportant variable in short-term research, with the researcher occupying the status of 'Anyman' (Gurney, 1991). Yet, for prolonged research, gender is an influential factor and should be recognised as an organising category of social life which requires some additional management (Warren, 1988). For example, male-dominated environments can be difficult spaces for female ethnographers, where they are often undermined or called into question, therefore strategies for managing oneself in the field are essential (Palmer, 2010). This includes managing interactions and gender performances, often performing gender in expected ways because failure to conform risks being discredited as both a female and researcher (Kleinman, 2007). Likewise, instances of sexism and sexual harassment can occur in the field and would therefore need to be managed (Gurney, 1991). Gurney (1985, p. 45) recalls 'turning a blind eye' to comments in the field that she would not tolerate in her day-to-day life, and Palmer (2010) chose to 'grin and bear it'. Warren (1988) describes this as a trade-off between tolerating these behaviours and the acquisition of knowledge, and one that female ethnographers need to manage. This can place a significant emotional burden on female researchers, and thus 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983) is another necessary management strategy. Emotional labour requires an individual 'to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind to others', necessitating a coordination of mind, feeling and the aspect of the self that is integral to individuality (Hochschild, 1983, p. 20). Indeed, it has been argued that disclosing emotions in research settings can undermine the validity of research, and call into question the abilities of the researcher, with academic convention and training typically encouraging the suppression of the researcher's emotions in fieldwork interactions (Jewkes, 2011). However, researchers managing their own emotions, as well as the emotions of their participants, is a key skill within ethnographic research, and suppressing this and writing it out of academic literature does a disservice to the field, the researcher, and other scholars (Blix and Wettergren, 2014; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Jewkes, 2011).

The nature of ethnography, as a research approach, demands embeddedness, and it is the role of the ethnographer to become immersed in the field while striking a balance between involvement and detachment (Bowles et al., 2021; Fine and Hancock, 2017; Olive et al., 2016). This involvement can be facilitated by shared identity characteristics, such as gender (Williams et al., 2021) and engaging in reflexivity (Olive et al., 2016). However, it has been suggested that for female ethnographers, this requires additional management or labour. Drawing on wider literature, this has been coined 'invisible work' and can be evident for females both in the workplace and at home (Daniels, 1987; Hatton, 2017; Adams, 2022). This invisible work can involve being physically out of sight, ignored or overlooked, devalued, unregulated, or a combination of these factors, and can encompass emotional labour, care work, identity work, domestic work or volunteer work (Hatton, 2017; Adams, 2022). As a consequence, females have the extra layer of engagement in additional labour alongside their recognised jobs or roles, driven by society's patriarchal systems and structures (Bierema, 2003). It is argued herein that this additional burden can also be evident in an ethnographic research context. Adopting a reflexive approach, and a gendered lens, this article argues that female ethnographers, within male-dominated research settings, are required to engage in additional labour and management processes to navigate ethnographic research safely and successfully.

The military context

This study is situated within two male-dominated spaces, spanning across both sport and the military. Sport has been established as a distinctly gendered activity dominated by males (Pfister, 2010; Hargreaves and Anderson; 2014; Hayhurst et al., 2021). Drawing on data and academic sources, I also present the military as another example of a male-dominated environment. Ministry of Defence (MOD) statistics highlight the domination of males in the UK military, with females accounting for only 5.7% of the regular forces in 1990 and 10.9% of all serving personnel in 2020 (MOD, 2005, 2020). Between March 2019 and March 2020, 12.6% of the total intake into the UK regular forces and future reserves were female, missing the target of 15% set by the MOD (2020). King (2016) acknowledges the recent increased participation of women in the military, but also highlights how they are subjected to an institutionalised cultural code that denies them equality and recognition. King (2016, p. 124) explains that 'it is possible to identify the emergence of a now well-established, even hegemonic, gender construct' in which female military personnel are classified as either sluts, bitches, dykes or the honorary man. This demonstrates how male soldiers have developed a collectively recognised classification system for females, around which they must negotiate their service (King, 2016). Such observations and understandings present the military as a male-dominated space, but also an environment in which sexism towards females, misogyny, homophobia and male-perpetrated discrimination occurs as part of the military's unwritten cultural code. It is a context that would need to be managed by any female ethnographer entering this field.

The ethnography at the focus of this article was the first to encompass military and veteran communities alongside sport for an extended 18-month period, with previous ethnographies in this area only occurring over days or weeks (Caddick and Smith, 2014;

Author, 2021). This ethnography occurred within a sport and physical activity pro-gramme provided specifically for veterans to support them in their transition from the military into civilian life. Delivered by an Active Partnership[1] (AP) in the Northwest of England, the programme was aimed at veterans of all ages from different branches of the military. While it was also open to all genders, 82% of veterans that attended iden-tified as male. This is representative of the military in which males account for 89% of the serving population (MOD, 2020). The programme consisted of weekly sporting sessions including football, climbing, archery and yoga, as well as one-off experiences such as water sports and wild camping, and was delivered over a 3-year period.

Methodology

Underpinned by a social constructivist paradigm, with a focus on subjectivity, co-construction and multiple truths (Sparkes and Smith, 2014), the research adopted an ethnographic approach (Watson, 2017). This ethnography spanned a period of 18 months, where I was embedded within the sport and physical activity programme, com-pleting over 450 hours of observations. Observation work was mostly undertaken while also taking part in the activities alongside the participants; although in certain sessions, such as football, observations were taken from the sidelines. As well as a structured diary for observation notes, I kept a reflective diary to record my personal thoughts and feelings on the process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Meyer and Willis, 2018). In addition, nine semi-structured interviews with programme stakeholders were carried out, along with seven semi-structured interviews with veterans engaging in the programme (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

It has been suggested that the roles of researchers in the field have been oversimplified (Richards, 2018). These are not static positions, but flexible and fluid, developing with the pathway(s) and progress of the research journey (Jewkes, 2011). Adler and Adler (1987) outline roles of a complete observer, ranging through to a complete participant. Similarly, within the policing literature, four broad categories have been identified, from full outsider to full insider, with several outsider/insider and insider/outsider posi-tions in between (Adeagbo, 2020; Paechter, 2012; Westmarland, 2001). These different levels of researcher integration within the field have implications, not least in terms of how a researcher's presence and visibility to others might influence changes in partici-pants' behaviours and practices (Bucerius, 2013; Cunliffe and Karunanayake, 2013). Much like insider and outsider positions (Adeagbo, 2020; Paechter, 2012; Westmarland, 2001) gender roles are also fluid, with female researchers being perceived differently depending on the participant group and research context (Bucerius, 2013). Across different research settings gender can have varying levels of salience, therefore it must be continuously negotiated, acknowledging the fact that some gender status markers may grant increased research access, whilst others can restrict it (Poulton, 2012).

Throughout the research, the Programme Lead employed by the AP acted as a gate-keeper, providing access to the sessions, veterans and programme stakeholders. However, the Programme Lead was also a military veteran, and it is possible this insider status (Adler and Adler, 1987; Westmarland, 2001) may have impeded their knowledge. Bucerius (2013) highlights the possibility that gatekeepers presenting assumptions as facts potentially overlook the dynamics and politics of a given group,

and restrict the potential to ask the detailed questions that present a complete picture. Prior to entering the field, I recognised that I would be situated as an outsider, and this would create some tensions and challenges that I would have to negotiate and potentially work harder to overcome. While I had doubts if it was a good idea for me to undertake this study, I still felt passionate and able to complete the research, driven by my personal experiences growing up with parents serving in the military and living on military bases. Once in the research environment, as anticipated, I was presented as an outsider due to my age, gender and civilian status, but this enabled me to ask the detailed questions that individuals holding an insider status may have overlooked. Being the only female present in most research settings was a circumstance I had expected and was aware of, ahead of entering the field. Borrowing language from Olive and Thorpe (2011, p. 425), my awareness of the gender differentiations and gendered interactions in the field, ahead of commencing the research, was shaped by a 'feminist habitus' that had been formed through 'early socialisation into the family, peer groups and education'. In my own experience this was heavily influenced by my parents' military service and growing up immersed in the military. It was also evident that, being in my mid-20 s, I was younger than most veterans who attended the sessions, as they were aged between 30 and 60 years. Being a student also reinforced this, with many veterans commenting that they did not have the chance to go to university and would have been in the military at my age. Despite not being a physical characteristic, the fact that I was a civilian in a military environment was potentially the most salient feature that situated me as an outsider. Having had family members serve in all three branches of the military and grown up on military bases while my father served in the Royal Air Force, I had some degree of knowledge, but ultimately I was still a civilian. One axis in which I was not separated was the fact that both the veterans and I were white, with no veterans from ethnic minority groups engaging in the programme. This reflects the demographics of the current serving military population with personnel from ethnic minorities representing only 8.8% of the UK regular forces (MOD, 2020).

Positioning myself in the research through highlighting these specific features, it is also essential to consider intersectionality (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1983; Bilge, 2014; Romero, 2017; Rodo-Zarate and Jorba, 2020). In this article I am not claiming to represent all women. As Lutz et al. (2011) explain, the claim of the bourgeois, white Western women's movement to represent all women is no longer accepted. Instead, it should be acknowledged that the experiences of women are shaped not just by gender but also by other social categories. Intersecting different identities with gender can open productive spaces for understanding and exploring, and may offer women opportunities to assert various identity features (Johnson, 2018). It is the field setting that determines what key attributes of the researcher are most important and emphasising these advantageous attributes can provide useful ways to build rapport with participants (Mazzei and O'Brien, 2009). The decision to conform or resist to prescribed gender norms in the field can enable or inhibit access to male-dominated spaces and the rapport-building process (Bucerius, 2013; Bucerius and Urbanik, 2019). Bucerius and Urbanik (2019) acknowledge that this negotiation of gender is difficult and can be tiring for the researcher, however it is necessary to gain acceptance, build rapport and develop relationships, particularly as a female undertaking ethnographic research in a male-dominated environment.

Managing unforeseen events

It is the role of the ethnographer to embrace the fluidity of the research approach, and manage the unforeseen events that may arise. This is an expectation of any ethnographer in the field irrespective of gender, however it may require more work for female ethnographers. The manner in which an ethnographer reacts to the needs of their participants, or the research environment, can provide opportunities to improve her position in the field and have significant implications (Green et al., 2017). For example, an ethnographer showing unwillingness to get involved in the research environment could signify a lack of commitment and a potential loss of credibility (Green et al., 2017).

At the outset of the research, I was positioned as a clear outsider, because of my gender, age and civilian status. This was also acknowledged across various conversations, including one with a security guard, outside the football venue, who questioned my presence saying I was 'too young to be a veteran' (fieldwork notes), and another with some of the veteran participants who suggested 'I don't look like a typical veteran … due to my age, being a lot younger than they might anticipate, and being female' (fieldwork notes). This presented a tension which I, as a female ethnographer, had to negotiate through additional labour to achieve some degree of insider status, recognising that outsider positions are less desirable and lack credibility (Johnson, 2018). This additional labour occurred through the management of unforeseen events, and using these instances to shift my role in research interactions and thereby minimise my outsider status. One such example occurred at a football tournament the veterans were competing in where one of the veterans said 'his wife was away for the weekend, so he had to bring the kids with him'. Later in the tournament, before starting a match, he 'asked me to watch over his little boy and girl in the pram. I sat them with me, but they didn't need anything, they just played with two other boys on the sidelines' (fieldwork notes), and at the time 'I wonder[ed] if I would have been asked to do this if I was male?' (first author's reflexive diary). This interaction made me feel uncomfortable, as I had not met the veteran or his children previously, and I was also aware of the heteronormative gendered labour divisions underpinning this scenario. However, as an unforeseen event, if I dealt with this inappropriately it could have demonstrated an unwillingness to get involved, putting distance between myself and the veterans and reinforcing my outsider status. This scenario could also be thought of as a test in which I had to prove myself and my commitment to the research participants, a situation other female ethnographers have experienced within policing (Souhami, 2020), crime (Bucerius and Urbanik, 2019) and sporting (Poulton, 2012) ethnographies. The situation made me feel uncomfortable, due to the pressure of taking responsibility for children I was unfamiliar with. However, I privately engaged in emotion work to shape and suppress this feeling so it was consistent with that which might be expected of me as a female (Hochschild, 1979, 1983), and I was able to mind the children for one match, consequently gaining the trust of the veteran concerned. This example demonstrates Green et al.'s (2017) suggestion that managing unforeseen events can improve the researchers' position, as well as highlighting the additional emotional labour that I engaged in to navigate this situation effectively. Mazzei and O'Brien (2009) provide a similar example, in which Mazzei was offered an unexpected marriage proposal from a male participant. While this led to an informative and emotional interview, Mazzei was required to engage in some

additional work, to reference a relationship and manage the romantic advances of her participants. Green et al. (2017) refers to these instances as 'breakthrough events', with the caveat that there is a fine line between such opportunities and making a mistake. For all ethnographers, managing these unforeseen and potential breakthrough events is an aspect of the role and will present a challenge, however for female ethnographers it is argued that navigating these instances successfully requires additional work and the use of appropriate management strategies.

Negotiating unforeseen events is key to ethnographers managing their position in fieldwork, and this does not remain consistent, with the potential for positions to change as a result of breakthrough opportunities or making a mistake (Mazzei and O'Brien, 2009; Richards, 2018). The previous example highlighted an instance where I was able to manage an unforeseen event to enhance my insider status, yet there were also occasions where these unforeseen events, and my management of them, relegated me to positions of invisibility. At the end of a football session it was mentioned that it was a veteran's birthday and the coach suggested a round of applause, whereas another veteran suggested getting him naked and shooting balls at him in the goal, as that is what they 'would have done in the army'. After this comment the veteran turned to me, remembering my presence, and jokingly asked me not to write that in my diary, commenting 'dear diary, the ugly one got naked' (fieldwork notes). My response to this was to simply laugh it off, despite feeling uncomfortable, highlighting not only my position of invisibility (Warren, 1988) but also the invisible work that was occuring (Daniels, 1987; Hatton, 2017; Adams, 2022). This work involved me engaging in additional emotional labour to navigate a situation that was heavily underpinned by military practices regarding a birthday ritual, within which I was automatically overlooked. These rituals are not exclusive to the military, existing within social contexts such as sport, but what makes them notable is the masculine connotations that surround them (Malmio, 2022). These military practices have an important role in fostering cohesion and facilitating the reproduction of a masculine and hegemonic culture, reinforcing the circumstances relating to the position and involvement of women in the military (Malmio, 2022). My experience within this situation highlights a tension faced by female ethnographers working in a male-dominated environment, where additional management processes are necessary to strike a balance between involvement and detachment, which is key to ethnographic research, attempting to blend into the research setting without becoming entirely invisible (Bowles et al., 2021; Fine and Hancock, 2017).

Gender and image management

Butler (1999) views gender as provisional, shifting, contingent and performed, and is critical of heteronormativity within society. Drawing on this understanding, ethnographers can negotiate their gender and manage their image (Baum-Talmor, 2019; Lumsden, 2009; Poulton, 2012; Pandeli, 2015; Richards, 2018). Yet, it has been suggested that researchers can never be in complete control of the impressions they make (Baum-Talmor, 2019), and consequently some may experience anxieties around what to wear when entering the field and how their gender is expressed (Poulton, 2012). Prior to attending my first activity session, I shared these anxieties noting in my diary,

'I'm feeling nervous but keen to get involved! I am being careful about clothing choice—gym leggings, top, and baggy jumper—and wearing no makeup. I want to look ready to get involved and try to fit in as much as possible' (first author's reflexive diary). Wearing athletic clothes was in keeping with the session environment and the attire worn by the participants, helping me to blend in and demonstrate my preparedness to take part. This also facilitated rapport building as the veterans recognised I was keen to get involved. Other female ethnographers, from a variety of research settings, have also adopted this approach, selecting attire similar to their participant group to help them blend into the research environment. Such an approach is seen in work examining girl racers (Lumsden, 2009), prison inmates (Pandeli, 2015) and football fans (Richards, 2018).

Attire selection has also been adopted in previous studies to minimise sexuality and de-emphasise gender, something that an ethnographer of one gender, whether male or female, must consider when undertaking research with participants of a different gender (Acejo and Abila, 2016; Bucerius, 2013). This can be attributed to the performative nature of ethnography and, most significantly here, gender (Butler, 1999). This is not assuming fixed notions of gender, but rather gender is being performed relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined, and regulated by surrounding hegemonic cultural structures. In the above examples of female ethnographers in male-dominated spaces, the visible signs of femininity are reduced, and a more masculine gender performance is constructed. In the veteran football sessions, it has already been discussed that I conscientiously selected my attire, however when invited to an away fixture as a spectator, moving outside of the usual session environment, I did not consider my clothing choice and gender performance as carefully. I wore my typical casual attire, outside of the sporting and research environment, of a skirt and jumper. This was a visible expression of femininity and resulted in a comment from a veteran who, stood underneath the spectator's balcony, said 'it is a good view from here' referring to him looking up my skirt (fieldwork notes). As the only female in the environment at the time, this made me feel very uncomfortable (first author's reflexive diary). Making connections back to the concept of unforeseen events (Green et al., 2017), I felt that not considering my attire and performance of gender more closely was a mistake, and a circumstance that I had failed to envisage and manage appropriately. While this mistake did not significantly impact my relationships with the veterans, this instance does raise an important tension around the gender differentiation present between myself and the participants, and the potential this has to cause discomfort. For female ethnographers in male-dominated spaces, this example demonstrates that a constant awareness of gender performance is necessary, and when this is not present it is then possible that the fine line of unforeseen events could be crossed, from making a breakthrough to making a mistake (Green et al., 2017).

Another aspect of gender management within the research field, experienced by female ethnographers, is the fulfilment of gender roles. These are often gender roles which are assigned to the ethnographer by their participants and, for female ethnographers in male-dominated settings, these include mother, sister, daughter and other stereotyped positions. While gender is recognised as provisional, shifting, contingent and performed (Butler, 1999), gender roles and stereotyped positions are shaped by 'the institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality' which 'requires and regulates

gender as a binary relation' (Butler, 1999, pp. 30–31). Therefore the management of gender, undertaken by female ethnographers, can often be restricted by the heteronormative structures evident within the research setting, thus requiring additional invisible work to manage gender performance in line with these expectations and structures. For example, similar to the experiences of Richards (2018), being the only female and often the youngest person present, I was quickly assumed into a daughter role where the veterans protected and looked after me. This was evident through small but recurring examples, such as the veterans making sure I was warm enough when watching the football outside, and encouraging me to stand by the radiator while they all stood in the cold (fieldwork notes). Also, at a football session,

> While the matches were going on a tackle was made near the touchline and the ball skewed up and hit me on the side of the face. The veteran I was stood with tried to deflect it away and the veteran's closest to me came rushing over to apologise and check I was okay. I said I was fine and that I'm used to it having playing sport from a young age. The coach also came rushing over to check on me and if I needed medical attention, he also said if I needed to take a moment or have a cry, I can. I told him I was fine and just carried on watching the game (fieldwork notes).

This incident led to the care and attention that might be bestowed by a parent on a daughter after a minor injury. This was evident from the initial medical attention and fuss I received, along with emails the following day to check I was alright (fieldwork notes). These examples were not significant events, but small actions that demonstrated the veterans' protective instincts towards me. It is also important to recognise that this was not solely informed by gender, but rather the intersection between age and gender, and it is possible that male ethnographers may have similar experiences when in all-female research environments where they are notably younger than their participants. However, as Mazzei and O'Brien (2009, p. 362) comment, 'assuming the air of the "naïve women", "fag hag", or "dancing daughter"', as well as other stereotyped gendered roles, informed by broader heteronormative and patriarchal structures, can provide access 'to information that might otherwise have been denied'. This incident and my assumed daughter role helped me to build trust and rapport with the veterans, with their protectiveness towards me prompting them to be more open with restricted or personal information on further encounters. This has been echoed by other female ethnographers who, during their research in male-dominated spaces, were often perceived as naïve, unthreatening and trustworthy, which they used to their advantage to generate a sense of safety with their participants (Souhami, 2020). Managing these perceptions, they were told deep, personal and often private stories (Lumsden, 2009; Souhami, 2020), and afforded access to usually restricted information (Jewkes, 2011). Among the veterans, I was able to emphasise features associated with the daughter role I was given to develop relationships and build a stronger rapport with my participants.

Another gendered role female ethnographers have been assumed into is that of a mother. It has been suggested that emphasising features associated with this role can increase access to a field and participant group (Soyer, 2014), as well as encouraging openness from participants to share their feelings and experiences (Baum-Talmor, 2019). Drawing on an earlier example, where I was asked to look after one of the veterans' children while he played football, this placed me into a caring motherly role.

Reflecting on this experience, I commented in my reflexive diary how this reinforced heteronormative gender performances, highlighting that the veteran did not ask any of the other, mostly male, spectators to undertake this task. Thus, it could be argued that gendered expectations attached to the role of a mother prompted him to ask one of the few females present. Butler (1999, p. 194) argues that for bodies to 'make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality'. Therefore, looking after children, and adopting the mother role would be expected of my gender performance within the heteronormative structures that are governing this situation. This highlights an additional layer of hidden work expected of female ethnographers in male-dominated settings, encompassing the work involved in presenting a gender performance that is aligned to the environment and participants' expectations, and managing the emotions that arise from this performance and being immersed in the research. This does also raise a question around the responsibility of a female ethnographer to not over-manipulate their participants in such contexts. With a connection to unforeseen events (Green et al., 2017), there is a fine line between passively accepting a stereotypical gendered role imposed by participants and consciously playing up to the gender role performance, which could be considered manipulation. This illuminates an important tension and responsibility of the female ethnographer to balance their gender performance when stereotyped roles are assigned to them, ensuring they remain ethical in their approach. This notion of emphasising certain feminine attributes and playing into gendered stereotypes has been raised in the academic literature (Gurney, 1985; Mazzei and O'Brien, 2009; Soyer, 2014), yet this fine line between gender role acceptance and performance manipulation was not acknowledged. It could be argued that this demonstrates another layer of invisible work required of female ethnographers to manage the degree to which they fulfil the stereotyped gender roles they are assigned into, and the emotions attached to this feeling of responsibility.

These examples illustrate the extra layers of invisible work and management that is necessary to fulfil various female gender roles, despite any discomfort these may cause. Outside of the research context, these may be gender roles and performances the ethnographer does not align themselves to, however within the research setting they have a responsibility to use and manage their gender performance, and the age dynamics, appropriately to navigate any tensions and expectations to gain access to the data they seek. Thus, it is important to consider the influence of these broader societal structures on a female ethnographer's gender performance, as it places certain demands and requires additional work to navigate and gain access to the research environment, and this can be a significant burden for the researcher.

Emotion management

Thus far I have highlighted several uncomfortable instances where it was necessary for me to manage my image, gender performance, behaviours and emotions to navigate the research setting and find a balance between involvement and detachment. Within these circumstances there is often little space for ethnographers to express their personality, opinions or values, sometimes evoking feelings of meaninglessness (Drake and

Harvey, 2013). Instead, ethnographers must continually and privately engage in invisible emotion management to ensure their feelings are consistent with the situations they are involved in and this can have human costs such as exhaustion and compassion stress (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Hochschild, 1979, 1983). While this is a burden placed upon all ethnographers entering the field, it is argued that a greater intensity of effort and labour is required of female ethnographers undertaking research in male-dominated settings. This is informed by restrictive patriarchal and heteronormative societal structures, where existing outside of these is generally seen as taboo (Butler, 1999). Thus, effort and labour is required from the female ethnographer to engage in repeated acts within these regulatory frames which over time produces a performance that is appropriate to the environment (Butler, 1999). This can be intense and emotionally demanding (Drake and Harvey, 2013), emphasising the need for not only managing gender performances, but also the emotions that arise from this. Some female ethnographers choose to adopt techniques that challenge the dominant norms and values within their male-dominated settings (Olive and Thorpe, 2011), however I chose to remain silent and let the uncomfortable situations I have discussed occur unchallenged. Drawing on the knowledge I had gained growing up in the military, I recognised that military culture, as well as the all-male environment, was an influencing factor in some of the uncomfortable situations I experienced, and thus, to be accepted by the veterans, I needed to brush them off despite my own personal discomfort and distress. It is important to note that military culture was tightly entangled within the all-male research environment, and therefore it would be difficult to separate them to understand which was most influential on my experiences. However, what this does demonstrate is the necessary and additional emotional labour I was required to engage in to suppress feelings that were inconsistent with the environment, encompassing military culture and the all-male dynamics, to enable my continued engagement (Hochschild, 1979). Making links to the concept of unforeseen events, I recognised that how I dealt with these uncomfortable incidents, within this all-male military-influenced environment, could be the difference between a breakthrough event, facilitating access, or a mistake that limited it (Green et al., 2017). Lumsden (2009) argues that brushing off or ignoring uncomfortable incidents is the only practical and safe way to carry out the research, especially when dealing with sexist behaviours that can be stressful and have a personal moral cost. Hence, this demonstrates some of the additional, ongoing and invisible work needed from female ethnographers to navigate a male-dominated research setting. Throughout the research process multiple decisions need to be made as to how uncomfortable and distressing situations are managed, and it is for the ethnographer to decide the emotions they present or keep hidden, and what is challenged or overlooked, with their own judgement and the research context informing this.

There is also a stereotyped view that females are vulnerable and open to sexual advances (Lumsden, 2009), and managing the emotions surrounding this can place another burden on the female ethnographer. In the veteran sport and physical activity programme there were instances of sexist comments being made, for example in a climbing session one veteran said, 'I'm not sexist but I find myself using feminine examples to explain stuff to the women at work'. He explained that he is an engineer, and most of the other engineers are male whereas the operation managers are largely female. He said that 'when I need to explain an engineering term I compare it to the warranty you

get when you buy hair straighteners or a hair dryer, and then they understand' (fieldwork notes). Despite not being aimed at me, this comment made me feel angered and uncomfortable; it was something I wanted to confront, but conscious of the need to build rapport and facilitate access I left the comment unchallenged. This instance is a clear example which illustrates Drake and Harvey's (2013) contention that there is often little space for ethnographers to express their own personality and values. Here, I engaged in invisible emotional labour to suppress my feelings and behave in a manner that was in keeping with the research context, and did not threaten my opportunities to develop access and rapport. This echoes the feelings of Cassidy (2014) and Cox (2019) in the 'pressure to play along' and can be understood as an example of the heterosexist power regime at work (Butler, 1999). With gender performances conforming to this, and respective feminine and masculine positions of having comparatively less and more power (Butler, 1999), the comment remained unchallenged. In another example, while helping move football equipment:

> I grabbed the pole nearest me to move it to the sidelines. One of the veterans offered to take it for me but I said it was fine and I might as well make myself useful. He replied, 'Yeah get pole dancing then' (fieldwork notes).

This was a sexually suggestive remark of objectification that again made me feel uncomfortable, but due to the 'pressure to play along' I allowed it to pass without comment at the expense of my personal and professional values (Cox, 2019). I deemed it the most suitable way to deal with this situation, however this still required a significant amount of hidden emotional labour. For female ethnographers undertaking research in a male-dominated space, sexist behaviours and remarks can be one of the most complex challenges they will face, with the potential to raise personal conflicts and dilemmas. In order to manage this effectively and safely, it is evident this requires a greater degree of effort and labour, with it being a part of the ethnographer's role to select the most appropriate means of negotiation, whether these comments and behaviours are challenged or not.

Conclusion

As the first ethnography to explore the male-dominated areas of sport and the military over a prolonged period, this article identifies and examines the additional management processes, in relation to the self and research environment, that female ethnographers in male-dominated spaces are required to undertake, to navigate the flexibility and immersion of ethnography. With a focus on managing unforeseen events (Green et al., 2017), emotions (Hochschild, 1979, 1983), image (Baum-Talmor, 2019) and gender (Butler, 1999), we have argued that female ethnographers are required to engage in a greater intensity and amount of effort and labour to successfully and safely undertake an ethnographic study, considering the need to strike a balance between involvement and detachment and building a rapport with the research participants (Bowles et al., 2021; Fine and Hancock, 2017). This additional and invisible work involves the management of unforeseen events to navigate the fine line between a breakthrough event and a mistake (Green et al., 2017), as well as female ethnographers managing their own gender performances in

accordance with the research environment, including both the heteronormative structures that may be governing the situation (Butler, 1999) and the stereotyped gender roles they are often assumed to hold (Richards, 2018; Soyer, 2014). Underpinning and intertwining with both these layers of additional work, demanded of female ethnographers in male-dominated environments, is the management of emotions. This encompasses emotions that arise from being within the research environment and reacting to important but unanticipated events; the emotions attached to gender performances and potentially having to perform a gender role that female ethnographers would not typically align themselves with; and the emotions that come from suppressing aspects of the self, and one's personality, that do not fully align to the research environment. Put otherwise, female ethnographers are continually engaging in invisible emotion management to ensure their feelings are consistent with the research context, placing a significant additional burden upon them (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Hochschild, 1979, 1983). Furthermore, in the field, female ethnographers are having to engage in multiple additional layers of hidden and invisible labour, driven by stereotypical gender role positions that are aligned with society's patriarchal and heteronormative systems and structures (Bierema, 2003).

This article therefore makes original empirical, methodological and practical contributions to the field of qualitative research. It contributes to the growing methodological literature, and responds to a recent call published within *Qualitative Research*, to embrace the hidden ethnography, recognise emotion and encourage reflexive accounts (Haddow, 2021). In so doing, this article evidences some of the additional, extra and invisible work undertaken by female ethnographers, which has only been hinted at previously (Bucerius and Urbanik, 2019; Cassidy, 2014; Cox, 2019; Lumsden, 2009; Pandeli, 2015; Poulton, 2012; Richards, 2018; Souhami, 2020). The experiences of female ethnographers undertaking research in male-dominated environments provides the empirical setting that reveals the invisible work and labour, drawing attention to the management of unforeseen events, image and gender, and the multi-layered demands of managing emotions. This also highlights some of the inherent complexities and challenges surrounding ethnographic research that are often written out of academic literature (Blix and Wettergren, 2014; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Jewkes, 2011).

As well as adding to the existing published work of female ethnographers who have reflected on their own experiences, it is hoped that the above discussion and arguments begin to support future female ethnographers in making them aware of the greater levels of labour, effort and intensity that will be demanded from them. In turn, acknowledgement and recognition of the demands of being a female ethnographer in academic writing, especially when working in male-dominated spaces, could have important practical implications for academia, universities and PhD programmes. This could lead to better research training for female researchers prior to entering the field, and the provision of appropriate ongoing support during the research process to ensure that female ethnographers are better equipped and prepared for some of the more challenging circumstances they might face. In terms of future research, whilst this study has focused on the experiences of females in male-dominated spaces, other work could explore the invisible work required of males entering female-dominated spaces for research purposes.

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Note

1. APs are responsible for creating conditions for an active nation in a sustainable way. There are currently 42 across England, which collaborate with local partners and consider the needs of their communities to create conditions that facilitate physical activity. Core services include coordinating delivery, securing and distributing funding, developing workforces, and promoting equality.

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