UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

This is a peer-reviewed, post-print (final draft post-refereeing) version of the following published document, This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health on 15 January 2020, available online: https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2020.1713204 and is licensed under All Rights Reserved license:

Williams, Rachel, Allen-Collinson, Jacquelyn and Hockey, John C ORCID logoORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5826-8005 (2021) Researching Retired Ex-Servicemen: Reflections on Ethnographic Encounters. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 13 (3). pp. 375-389. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2020.1713204

Official URL: https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2020.1713204
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2020.1713204
EPrint URI: https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/7880

Disclaimer

The University of Gloucestershire has obtained warranties from all depositors as to their title in the material deposited and as to their right to deposit such material.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation or warranties of commercial utility, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or any other warranty, express or implied in respect of any material deposited.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation that the use of the materials will not infringe any patent, copyright, trademark or other property or proprietary rights.

The University of Gloucestershire accepts no liability for any infringement of intellectual property rights in any material deposited but will remove such material from public view pending investigation in the event of an allegation of any such infringement.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR TEXT.

Researching Retired Ex-Servicemen: Reflections on Ethnographic Encounters

Rachel Williams, Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson & John Hockey

This version accepted for publication in

Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health

6/1/20

Abstract

The opportunities and challenges that younger, female, civilian researchers can encounter when undertaking ethnographic research with predominantly male military veterans are relatively underexplored sociologically. This is despite a growing literature on reflexivity in military studies over the past decade. To address this gap, we draw on symbolic interactionist insights to examine the reflective account of a British, female researcher in her mid-20s, who conducted qualitative research with 20 'older' (aged 60+) retired servicemen from the Royal British Legion, a United Kingdom charity providing support for military veterans and their families. The study explored ex-servicemen's embodied experiences of physical activity. The findings presented here cohere around four salient themes identified in the ethnographic reflections: (1) researcher positionality as a young, female, civilian researcher in a traditionally masculine militarised world; (2) managing distressing topics and interactional discomfort; (3) maintaining an 'ethic of care'; and (4) dilemmas regarding representational issues and ex-servicemen's embodied experiences.

Introduction

The last decade has seen a growing literature on reflexivity in military studies, including UK- and US-based studies (e.g., Jenkings et al. 2008, Enloe 2015, Rech et al. 2015, Bulmer and Jackson 2016, Carreiras and Caetano 2016, Carreiras and Castro 2016, Hockey 2016, Caddick et al. 2017). Ethnographies of the military have, however, been predominantly conducted by male researchers employing participant observation; examples include: Pipping (1947, 2008) who gathered extensive empirical data on his own Finnish experience during and after World War II; Ben-Ari (1998), an officer and professional anthropologist, who studied an elite unit in the Israeli Defense Force; King (2006), who explored how military forces in Britain actually train and operate; Tortorello (2010), who investigated conceptions of 'courage' among US Marines; and MacLeish (2012), who conducted fieldwork with soldiers, veterans, military families and community members at and around the U.S Army's Fort Hood, Texas. Irwin's (2012) study, on military troops in Afghanistan, was the only military ethnography we identified that had been conducted by a woman. Irwin (2012) opted for living in close intimacy with the troops, participating in their experiences, short of combat, as fully as possible, and she does include some reflection on being a researcher in this military setting.

Despite this developing literature, including a wide-ranging edited collection by Carreiras and colleagues (2016), to date scant consideration has been given to the specific challenges (and opportunities) confronting women researchers, particularly younger women, with no prior military knowledge or experience, researching older military/ex-military male personnel. As Gurney (1985) noted some time ago, a consideration in qualitative research is how the status characteristics of the researcher might affect the process of gaining access to, establishing, and then maintaining rapport with participants. Indeed, as she further argues, some researchers may never succeed in achieving more than superficial acceptance from participants because of status issues, and female researchers studying male-dominated groups frequently find themselves in such a position. Gender and status relations in fieldwork and

other forms of qualitative research have subsequently received more academic attention than at Gurney's (1985) time of writing (e.g. Woodward 2008, Goffman 2014). Woodward (2008), for example, in discussing her role as a woman researcher 'hanging out' and 'hanging about' in a male-dominated boxing gym in northern England, highlights how binary oppositions often prevail, including those of women/men, and importantly 'insiders'/'outsiders' to the field.

To add original insights to the literature on researching the military, here we draw upon critical reflections from an ethnographic study undertaken by the first author Dr Rachel Williams (R), a young (mid-20s), female researcher whose doctoral study focused on the lived experiences of male, retired service personnel, who had previously served in the British Armed Forces. In the article, we broaden the focus beyond gender and 'degrees of insiderness' (Allen-Collinson 2013), to consider not only gender in a traditionally masculine lifeworld, but also distressing topics and interactional discomfort, an 'ethic of care', and representational dilemmas. First, we provide brief contextual information about the British military and the Royal British Legion, where the fieldwork was undertaken.

The British military is an extensive and complex organisation comprised of the following Forces: Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Marines, and the Royal Navy. These distinct groups are tasked with defending the UK, and its overseas territories. They are also responsible for providing humanitarian aid, supporting international peacekeeping efforts and promoting the UK's wider interests (Armed Forces 2018). Participants in the current study had previously served in either the Army or the Royal Air Force and were currently members of the Royal British Legion (RBL), a British charity organisation that provides social, financial and emotional support to veterans and members of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants (The Royal British Legion 2018). For R, entering the field without any prior

knowledge or experience of these military and ex-military lifeworlds, she was stepping into a cultural environment of which she knew very little. Before considering some of the interactional challenges confronted, and portraying the key themes identified in her reflective account, we describe the research project.

The Research

The research, from which the ethnographic reflections are drawn, involved 20 retired servicemen[1] (13 retired Army servicemen and seven retired Royal Air Force (RAF) servicemen) living at the time of the research in a small English city. All participants were aged 60-plus, retired from paid employment, and members of the RBL, which had its organisational headquarters in a medium-sized building in the city centre. Once ethical approval had been granted by the University Committee, R contacted the chairman of the RBL as a gatekeeper, to request signed permission to conduct research at the RBL, and recruit members via RBL meetings and events. The process of obtaining ethical approval and gaining access to the chairman of the RBL was testing and time-consuming, but this may have been equally problematic for a male researcher, given that more generally the challenges of gaining access to military institutions have been noted by others (e.g., Hockey 1986, Greenwood 2017, Jenkings et al. 2011). Once permission was granted, R was permitted to attend RBL coffee-morning meetings, and was asked by the chairman to provide a verbal overview of the study to all those present at coffee mornings and other RBL gatherings. R then began to approach and talk to the former servicemen individually, asking if they would be interested in taking part in the study and giving them the opportunity to ask questions. Those who agreed to participate

[1] Servicemen were selected, as one of the key areas of interest in the doctoral study focused on older men's embodiment.

were asked to sign a consent form to confirm their agreement and fill in a screening questionnaire. This latter enabled R to assess which participants fitted the inclusion criteria she had specified. Participants had to be retired, aged 60 or over, served in active duty post World War II and up to and including 1975, and be able to understand and speak fluent English.

Opportunistic sampling allowed R to take advantage of unexpected opportunities (see Gratton and Jones 2010) and unforeseen encounters that arose within the weekly RBL coffee-morning meetings. As rapport gradually developed with members of The Legion, participants began to invite her to other RBL gatherings and events. Snowball sampling (Bryman 2012) resulted in further participants being recruited to the study, making a total of 20 in all. As Atherton (2016) found when researching military men, recruiting participants using a more informal snowballing approach can be more effective than recruiting through official channels. Although our participants were retired, we were cognisant that, as a civilian, female, young researcher, R might well encounter some difficulties gaining access to former servicemen. We were also conscious that R's encounters with the men might have been impacted by participants' status in the military hierarchy and that she could potentially experience different interactions based on military rank. Participants were therefore asked to state on the initial screening questionnaire their highest rank in active service. Data analysis revealed that although the 'running order' of the RBL is structured hierarchically, it is not necessarily influenced by participants' previous military rank, nor did rank seem to impact on researcher-participant interactional encounters. For instance, Victor, a former Major, noted:

> Yes, I was a Major but that didn't affect me becoming chairman of the RBL. The person before me only did National service and so anyone can take up the positions, it really doesn't matter. (Victor/63yrs/Army/Focus group 3)

R also noted how the men's previous military ranks were not noticeable upon initial encounters, and that the RBL seemed to promote an all-inclusive, supportive environment:

> Unless they told me, or I looked at their screening questionnaires, I wouldn't have been able to tell that so and so was a higher rank. Everyone seems to get involved and they encourage each other to take on various different roles and responsibilities. Victor was even making cups of tea today. (Researcher field note/February, 2015)

A 'limited topical life history' (Allen-Collinson 2011) approach was adopted, in order to examine two particular periods in the ex-servicemen's lives: 1) time when active in the military; and 2) lives post-retirement from the military, including as 'older' retirees (aged 60 and over). The life-history approach is well-suited to analysing the nexus of social and occupational structures and personal experiences, and the 'limited, topical life history' (Allen-Collinson 2011), focuses on a specific element in an individual's life. We were interested in both military experiences, and the men's lives post-retirement from the military.

Data were collected via three semi-structured focus groups, detailed observations at a gamut of RBL meetings and events, and informal conversations (including telephone conversations) with the ex-servicemen. R took part in many coffee-morning discussions, including with 'The Wives' (the term used by both women and men for spouses/partners of the veterans), whose involvement in the RBL emerged clearly:

> Participants' and their wives/partners were all sitting integrating together at the RBL coffee morning, the women made sure everyone had a drink and a place to sit down. The chairman's wife had all the paperwork organised for the coffee morning meeting and she supported her husband with the introductory morning speech. (Researcher field note/February, 2015)

Detailed field notes such as the one above, together with personal reflections, were written by R throughout the research process. Additional researcher reflections were made after

the study had been completed, including in discussions with Professor Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson and Dr John Hockey as doctoral supervisor and 'critical friend' (Owton 2016), respectively. In the researcher reflections below, we employ a symbolic interactionist framework in analysing R's accounts, for example, in relation to Hochschild's (1983) theorisation of emotional labour. Although the primary purpose of the article is methodological, we provide a brief discussion of some key symbolic interactionist insights upon which we draw when considering researcher and participants' interaction. Commensurate with symbolic interactionist (SI) concerns, we were interested in exploring the processes through which meaning is constructed between social actors engaged in sense-making activity in specific contexts, including in the focus group encounters.

A salient conceptualisation in SI is the notion of self and identity as fluid, relational and ongoing social processes (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934). The self is thus theorised as a process emergent in interactional encounters and thus malleable and relational. Cooley (1998), for example, posited the notion of the 'looking-glass self', comprising both a personal 'I' and a more social 'me'. The latter is cognisant of, and responds to, the social expectations and evaluations of others, both 'significant others' such as family, friends, colleagues, and the 'generalised other' in the form of the norms and values of wider society internalised by the individual (Mead 1934). For the RBL participants, the norms and values of the British military had been inculcated into their embodied selves via a powerful socialisation process, commencing with their initial 'basic training', continuing throughout their military service and enduring into their older age. This is perhaps not surprising given the 'role stripping' procedures evident within basic training (Hockey 1986).

Researcher Reflections

The key findings upon which we draw are grouped under four themes we identified in R's reflections: (1) researcher positionality as a young, female, civilian researcher in a traditionally masculine (ex)military world; (2) managing distressing topics and interactional discomfort; (3) maintaining an 'ethics of care'; and (4) dilemmas regarding representational issues and ex-servicemen's lived, embodied experiences. In reality, many of these elements were intertwined and overlapping, but here we have tried to disaggregate them for analytic purposes. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants.

Researcher positionality

In terms of R's positionality when entering the ethnographic field, she was a young woman in her mid-20s, white, non-disabled, and university educated, undertaking a doctorate - with no military experience and no direct experience of the RBL. Before conducting her doctoral research, R had no previous academic experience of working with older adults, particularly retired servicemen; her own embodied self therefore did create a certain degree of 'difference' in relation to her participants, certainly in regard to age and gender, and (for many) a university education. On entering the RBL 'field' for the first time, as a research 'outsider' (Greenwood 2017), R felt awkward and unsure, unfamiliar with the military world that her participants knew so well:

> Standing outside the door to the RBL coffee morning meeting, I can hear voices and laughter but I think I will just wait a few more minutes. I start fiddling with my phone; I can't bring myself to open the door. I don't know anything about the military, what if they don't take me seriously. The door opens, and after an awkward 'hello' I am welcomed inside… (Researcher field note/February, 2015)

At this early point, some of R's own preconceptions and assumptions regarding the military, and older adults more generally, were challenged. This highlighted to her the importance of bracketing and engaging in on-going reflective discussions with Professor Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson in relation to her positioning vis-à-vis participants and the research field, as has also been discussed in relation to researching the military (see for example, Jaffe 1995; Basham and Bulmer 2017; Greenwood 2017). As McNarry et al. (2019) contend, a researcher can never be fully detached from the research process. As sociologists, our theories and concepts are socialised into us, as are ideas, interpretations, meanings and assumptions. It was important, therefore, to make a conscious effort to 'stand back' and maintain a critical perspective and analytic distance. Interestingly, R's presuppositions and potential misperceptions often appear to be considered *stereotypical* of the younger generation by older adults, including by RBL members (Williams et al. 2018). Before entering the RBL, R was concerned that she might feel somewhat socially excluded and not particularly welcome at the coffee morning meetings. She had assumed that the RBL would consist only of older men and that conversations between RBL members would centre on the military, wars, and other historical topics with which she was not particularly familiar. Her preconceptions regarding the RBL, however, proved to be unfounded and inaccurate, as detailed in her field notes from the first coffee morning attended:

> I am surprised; there are as many women here as there are men.
>
> As well as discussing my doctoral research project with the RBL members, I entered into conversations with both the men and women about things such as sport, shopping, travelling and university life. The men kept making light hearted jokes, most of which I didn't understand, which they found quite entertaining. (Researcher field notes/February, 2015)

As noted above, the RBL members made reference to certain insider knowledge that R did not share or understand. She also struggled to understand some of the terminology the men used. Despite her lack of shared 'insider-ness' (Greenwood 2017) with the men, however, she was pleasantly surprised at her warm reception by the RBL members.

Researchers have highlighted the importance of reflexivity in the researcher role (see for example, Smith et al. 2009, Wilkinson and Eacott 2013, McNarry et al. 2019), including the embodied-self of the researcher (Finlay 2006), and the need for researchers to be aware of how their own presentation of self could potentially impact participants' behaviour and willingness to engage with the research. R was acutely aware of the corporeal 'presentation' she made as a fit, healthy and able-bodied young woman, in contrast to the older, male bodies of her participants, some of whom had visible bodily impairments. As Crowley (2007) notes, Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation highlights how individuals often make conscious choices about which of their characteristics, mannerisms and beliefs they reveal to others. This means that researchers need to make informed choices about which identities and information they share with participants, as well as how to present their body-self. Thus, when first meeting the men, R consciously maintained a highly professional attitude and appearance, dressing formally and 'smartly' for the RBL gatherings and also at the focus group interviews, to signal her definition of the latter situation as being a professional, academic and relatively 'serious' occasion.

There has been considerable discussion in the ethnographic literature about the relative advantages and disadvantages of insider-versus-outsider research, and indeed the whole notion of 'degrees of insiderness' (e.g., Allen-Collinson 2013, Bucerius 2013, Greenwood 2017, McNarry et al 2019). The relative 'outsiderness' of R vis-à-vis the military and RBL life-worlds gave rise to some degree of anxiety regarding unfamiliarity with the RBL setting and its inhabitants. It also had advantages in terms of bracketing, in that she came to the research with

relatively few pre-conceptions about the lived experience of military life and life in post-military retirement, allowing her to approach the ethnographic field with openness. To enhance reflexivity, R reflected throughout the study on what she experienced during data collection and how she herself might have influenced participants' actions. As McNarry and colleagues (2019) note, these kinds of personal reflective notes are often recorded as an integral part of field notes, and provide another layer of data collection. Analogously, and to heighten reflexivity, R noted: i) her own responses to participants' actions and accounts; ii) how participants reacted to the questions she posed; iii) how she responded to the answers, and; iv) any wording or prompts that required revision or further development to enhance subsequent data collection.

Researchers have identified how the gender of the interviewer and interviewees, and their level of military knowledge and experience, can influence the research process (see, for example, Atherton 2016, Greenwood 2017). Although initially worried about her lack of knowledge of the military and the RBL, R's limited understanding turned out to be advantageous in the initial encounter with participants, acting somewhat as an 'icebreaker'. The following conversation with Simon (69yrs/RAF) was taken from R's field notes, and the geographical reference relates to his operational deployment:

> **S**: Come on, keep up. Don't you know where that is either? It's a good job you're not doing a geography PhD because you would fail [laughs].
>
> **R**: [Laughs] Yeah, geography was never my strongest subject! (Researcher field notes/ February, 2015)

The men were amused by how little R appeared to know about the military and the geographical locations where they had previously served. R felt that to some extent, her position as a female researcher and her limited knowledge and experience of the military

lifeworld served to reduce any potential power imbalances (see also Caddick et al. 2017) that may have been present had she also had a military background, and might have been construed as 'questioning' the men's expertise. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2002: 207-208) have suggested various tactics for interviewing men, which correspond well with R's experiences in the field; for instance, allowing 'symbolic expressions of control' – by letting the men ask her questions and engaging light-heartedly with their jocular remarks. The retired servicemen were thus able to assert their social identities as 'experts', potentially reducing any perceived threat to their masculinity. RBL members seemed to feel at ease talking to R about their military and more general life experiences and told her that they enjoyed 'educating' her on the armed forces. It is important to consider, however, the implications of these kinds of interactional encounters vis-a-vis being a (young) woman researcher. Whilst R decided to maintain the interactional flow via engaging in 'banter', as this generated rich data, other researchers may reach different tactical decisions. Perhaps with the benefit of many more years in research, R's decisions *may* have been different, but as with much qualitative research, maintaining the interactional flow was a key element in the research.

The positive nature of the researcher's entrée to the RBL club and the ensuing friendly social interaction were reflected in comments from the focus group data:

> When you first came to the club, I don't know what you expected, but what I saw was a delight. You interacted with the people. The people interacted with you. And I think it was a very positive experience for all of us. (Victor/63yrs/Army/Focus group 3)

During these initial interactional encounters with the RBL members, R worked hard to establish trust and rapport with the retired servicemen and their families. During the coffee

morning meetings, she discussed with RBL members her own positionality and interest in exploring retired servicemen's life experiences. Members spent many hours talking to R about their lives and their time in the military, they shared deep, emotional and sensitive information and they seemed to appreciate the effort R made in remembering their personal stories and in showing interest in their family lives:

> **R**: I said hello to Samuel (65yrs/Army) and asked him how his granddaughter's dance show went last week. He looked at me, smiled and said…
>
> **H**: Ah…you have a good memory. She was very good…. she was in the group with the other very young ones, there was about fifteen of them bobbing up and down and pointing their toes.
>
> **R:** How lovely, I remember when I used to take part in dancing shows when I was a little girl. My dad used to make all of my costumes. (Researcher field notes/ February, 2015)

It is to the emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) often involved in fieldwork, and qualitative research in general, that we now turn in considering how R managed distressing topics and interactional discomfort in the focus group interview setting.

Managing distressing topics and interactional discomfort

As noted above, focus groups were a key data collection method. They allowed participants to interact freely with each other as well as with R, leading to in-depth discussions and rich data. Discussions were also facilitated by the participants sharing a similar occupational socialisation

process and military career, or time ‘in’ (the term often used for time spent in the military) the latter utterance immediately invoking the military world with its particular values, embodied patterns of action and shared sentiments to those who have been ‘in’. Commensurate with our symbolic interactionist perspective, the focus group setting offered R the opportunity to study the ways in which participants collectively made sense of, and constructed meanings around particular phenomena (Bryman 2012). In this sense, focus groups as a method of data collection reflect, to some extent, the processes through which, in everyday life, meaning is constructed between social actors engaged in sense-making activity in specific contexts; a key sociological concern for symbolic interactionists (see for example, Wilkinson 1998; Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2007; Bryman 2012). Thus, focus groups can, in some ways, be regarded as a more ‘naturalistic’ approach compared to individual interviews, as some have argued (e.g. Finch and Lewis 2003; Bryman 2012). Moreover, focus groups create spaces in which participants challenge, develop, extend and even undermine themselves and others (when there is a disagreement on certain issues, for example) in ways that allow for the proliferation of different perspectives and sometimes for normative assumptions to be revealed (Sparkes and Smith 2014). In our focus groups, participants often argued with each other and challenged each other’s views, as R recorded in her field notes:

> The focus group interview went well today, the men really engaged in the group discussions. It did get quite heated at one point though, especially when they were considering the differences between their own experiences and the experiences of current service personnel; I didn’t think they would actually argue with each other like that! (Researcher field note/March, 2015)

When faced with a confrontational situation, participants appeared to think about and sometimes to revise their own views during the interactional encounter. Some authors have argued that critical debates or arguments that occur in focus groups can be very helpful in the elicitation of a wide variety of different views (see Bryman 2012; Sparkes and Smith 2014). In contrast, however, more intense debate and entrenched arguments can at times be problematic within the interactional context of the focus group interviews. For example, R portrays through the following field note how some participants argued to the point where, it seemed, they just wanted to be seen as the person who held the 'correct' view, and the original focus of the argument had vanished from mind:

> I don't think they could even remember their original points by the end of the argument. I didn't have a choice, I had to intervene. We would have been there all day if I hadn't. (Researcher field note/March, 2015)

At this point, and despite some initial discomfort at feeling obliged to step in and 'take charge' of the interaction, R felt it was not beneficial to the participants or to the research study to carry on the discussion in this area, and therefore she decided to move the discussion on to another topic.

As Bryman (2012) and Sparkes and Smith (2014) point out, some people may not wish to share intimate experiences and sensitive issues in a group situation. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) experiences and other sensitive issues, such as losing a life-partner, were raised and discussed by participants in the focus group interviews. It was evident that these were distressing subjects for the men to talk about openly, even though they themselves instigated the conversation and appeared very willing to speak about such issues and

experiences. At times, both participants and R displayed noticeable discomfort when discussing these personal and sensitive issues and experiences in a group situation. Participants' facial expressions, lapses in controlled 'facework' (Goffman 1959), physical indicators and body language were indicators of such discomfort, as R recorded in her notes:

> His eyes started to water. I could tell he wanted to talk about his PTSD experiences, but it wasn't the right place, there were too many people, all eyes were on him! He paused, silence filled the room. My head was spinning, I was desperately trying to think of the right thing to say, but what do you say? (Researcher field note/March, 2015)

R sought to manage this specific incidence of what she perceived as interactional discomfort and potential 'loss of face' (Goffman 1967), particularly in front of a predominantly male audience, by thanking the participant for sharing such raw, personal experiences. We discuss below such interpretive work and interactional 'management', and how these may be problematic, but also may generate learning experiences. In the above instance, R asked the participant if he would be willing to continue the discussion privately with her after the focus group session (to which he agreed) and then she guided the topic of conversation in a new direction in accordance with the interview schedule. This encounter indicates the need for researchers to be sensitive to, and empathetic towards participants' emotions and feelings (Smith et al. 2009; Carroll 2013) as part of the emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) they undertake. James (1989: 15) defined emotional labour as 'the labour involved in dealing with other peoples' feelings, a core component of which is the regulation of feelings'. Hochschild (1983: 7; italics in original), made a useful analytic distinction in using *emotional labour* with regard to paid labour (in her case, in the service industries), where there is: 'the management

of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value'*. In contrast she employed the term *emotion work* to refer to acts carried out in a more private context where they have *use value*. As Owton and Allen-Collinson (2014) point out, however, this distinction is not always so clear-cut in research. As a university doctoral student, R was in many ways in a professional role as a researcher, and sought to manage her own and to some extent her participants' emotions in order to maintain this professional research setting and to ease the social interaction between participants. This work was not only 'professional', however, in terms of her facial and bodily display being sold for economic benefit, for R also felt a degree of personal friendship-type commitment to many of her participants. Situational fluctuations in her professional/friendship role necessarily complicated the emotional labour/emotion work balance, depending upon context (see also, Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014).

As Carroll (2013) notes, the work of academics is generally not classified as forming part of the service industry, but many teaching and research academics, particularly qualitative researchers, do employ extensive emotional labour in their work, as a result of close, face-to-face engagement and considerable personal interaction with their students and research participants (see also Dickson-Swift et al. 2009). As part of this emotional labour, researchers also often engage in actively establishing rapport and trust with participants (Bucerius 2013), and in generating and maintaining an 'ethic of care' (Plummer 2001).

Maintaining an 'ethic of care'

When arranging the focus group sessions, R encountered a number of challenges. As part of an 'ethic of care' (Plummer 2001), she made all best efforts to ensure that the men were fully aware of the study requirements (including attending a focus group interview at the university)

before they gave formal consent to take part in the research. One participant, Mathew, however, when faced with the practical realities of actually taking part in a focus group, and when asked by R if he could confirm his availability for an interview session, informed her that it was no longer possible for him to be involved. R was somewhat taken aback, and found this sudden change of heart frustrating, particularly as she had already spent a good deal of time talking to Mathew at the RBL. She responded politely, however, and reassured him that he had every right to withdraw at any point throughout the study, although she was interested in why he no longer felt able to participate, as a field note indicates:

> It really surprised me when he said he could no longer take part in the research. He seemed so engaged and interested when I initially spoke with him about the study, and I made sure he knew and understood what was involved before he signed the consent form. Oh, it was so frustrating, but as a researcher I understand that these things can happen and that it is important to respect your participants' wishes. I reassured him that it was ok to withdraw, but after spending so much time talking to him at the RBL and getting to know him, I found his decision so strange, so I asked him if there was any particular reason why he could no longer take part. (Researcher field note/March, 2015)

Mathew (88yrs/RAF) responded to explain why he felt he had to withdraw from the study, which appeared to be for purely practical reasons relating to transport and mobility:

> **M**: I think what you are researching is interesting and very important but I couldn't get there. Not now anyway. The bus stop is in town and I couldn't walk all that way through town. I'm not as fit as I used to be! (Researcher field note/March, 2015)

It emerged that for Mathew, the thought of walking through town alone in the face of declining energy levels and personal mobility proved too difficult, and the increased environmental shift to risk associated with walking from the bus stop to the university campus discouraged him from continuing his involvement with the research project. In symbolic interactionist terms, there appears to be a poignant contrast between Mathew's 'remembered' 'glorified, self' and his current-day, less glorified self (Adler and Adler 1989; Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2001). He found his ability to be physically active significantly hindered by his physical environment (see Bell and Wheeler 2015). Mathew's concerns strongly underline that when conducting research with older adults there are many considerations in making data collection processes accessible for older and/or less mobile people.

In response to Mathew's disclosure, R reassured him that she understood completely why he did not feel able to attend a focus group; however, she voiced how much she enjoyed discussing his life stories with him and emphasised that his experiences of the military, retirement and the RBL would be extremely valuable to the research. In operating an ethic of care, she asked if there was anything that she could do to make the focus group more accessible and suggested a taxi (paid through the research budget) as an appropriate solution:

> **R:** Would you like to come along to a focus group if I could arrange taxis for you?
>
> (Researcher field note/March, 2015)

Mathew looked pleased and a little surprised, and he followed on to say:

M: Really, well if it is no trouble for you…

R: Of course, I can sort that out no problem. If you want to have a think about it, I will give you a call in a few days to confirm arrangements if you decide that you still want to come.

M: Ok, R - that is fine with me. (Researcher field notes/March, 2015)

A further example, in relation to maintaining an ethic of care in the research setting, involves Harold, an 80-year-old retired army serviceman, who attended one of the focus group sessions at the university. After the interview some of the men carried on discussions with R in the corridor whilst her colleague helped to clear the room for the next booking. Out of the corner of her eye, R saw Harold approaching her but without his usual walking stick. Although she was engaged in conversation with other study participants, R was concerned that something was wrong as Harold was having to use the wall to steady himself. She politely excused herself from the conversation and walked over to Harold, who said breathlessly:

H: I've lost my stick!

R: Ok, I am just going to grab you a chair and then we can have a look for your stick. (Researcher field notes/March, 2015)

Harold nodded with a relieved look on his face. R quickly dashed into the focus group room to get a chair for Harold and to ask her colleague to come and assist with finding the stick:

R: Here we go, you take a seat and we can have a look for your stick, where did you go after the focus group?

H: I was talking to…I went to the toilet.

R: Let me go and have a quick look for it then, I will be back in a minute. (Researcher field notes/March, 2015)

R found the stick hanging on the back of the toilet door and returned it to Harold. As Harold had parked his car a fair distance from the interview location, R asked if he would like both herself and her colleague, with whom Harold had been engaged in conversation whilst R went on the hunt for his stick, to accompany him on his walk to the car park:

R: Shall we all walk over to the car park together? I have some things I need to drop off and it will be nice to have a walk in the sunshine.

H: That would be helpful, this campus is a maze.

R: [laughs] yes, I got lost many times trying to find lecture rooms! (Researcher field notes/March, 2015)

R was pleased that Harold was happy for them to walk with him. After the incident with his stick she was concerned that he might have had difficulty finding the way back to his car. She felt that it was her responsibility as a researcher to ensure that her participants were safe during their university visit.

Awareness of the variety of physical barriers or issues that can deter or prevent older adults from taking part in research has the potential to inform decision-making in future projects. For example, when considering and promoting older adults' participation in research, the facilities, the built and/or natural environment, transport, and safety are just some of the factors that require careful thought. Moreover, researchers often find themselves in situations where they are required to 'think on their feet', and ethical approval and procedures in place at the beginning of a research study can sometimes constrain the 'ethic of care' that researchers are able to operationalise. For instance, had A1's colleague not been on campus that day, Harold would have had to find his own way to the car, as the ethical approval in place would not have permitted a young female researcher to be alone with an adult male outside of the interview room/university building.

A further theme we identified relates to some of the dilemmas regarding representational issues and ex-servicemen's lived, embodied experiences.

Dilemmas regarding representational issues and ex-servicemen's lived, embodied experiences

Recent research has highlighted how veterans' own voices and perspectives can become lost through the research process, due to the current, complex political landscape (Caddick et al. 2017) and the interests of those who seek to represent them (Bulmer and Jackson 2016). Thus, within the realm of critical military studies, authors such as Jenkings et al. (2008), Rech et al. (2015), Bulmer and Jackson (2016), and Caddick et al. (2017) are calling for more dialogic forms of research that embrace honesty and openness in communication and exchange, and which respect experiences which fall outside of our own horizons (see Frank 2012); horizons are the very limit of a person's knowledge and understanding.

After reflecting on focus group encounters with participants, particularly the instances when participants spoke of loss and PTSD experiences, R became acutely aware, through discussions with Professor Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson and Dr John Hockey, of the dangers of misrepresentation and how misguided generalisations could potentially cause damage to her participants' 'veteran' identities (see Caddick et al. 2017). Although R sought to manage incidences of interactional discomfort and potential 'loss of face' (Goffman 1967) in the focus group setting, her reflections and an informal conversation with George (77yrs/retired RAF serviceman) after his focus group session, caused her to question whether the men's openness about loss and PTSD and the moments of silence that tended to follow these discussions were interactions that actually needed to be managed, especially by a young, female researcher with no comparable experience and limited by her own horizons of understanding (see Caddick et al. 2017):

> **R:** Thank you for continuing discussions with me, I was worried that you would find it difficult to discuss these things in the focus group setting.
>
> **G:** What you have got to understand is that we do talk about it [PTSD and military experiences] but there are things that will never be said, they can't be told to anyone. But that's ok, it's understood. It's the same for all of us [other focus group participants], even though we have different perspectives and experiences, which I'm sure you gathered from the group… the talks we were having. (Continued interview discussion/March, 2015)

Before having this frank discussion with George, R was convinced that these topics would be too 'difficult' and damaging for the men to talk about in a group setting. To her, the long silent pauses and 'performance breaks' in terms of lapses in participants' controlled

'facework' (Goffman 1959) represented discomfort and upset. By engaging critically in reflexive work and analysing the conditions under which the research was conducted (Carreiras and Castro, 2016), and the specific interactional milieu in which these topics were discussed, R realised that she may have underestimated the strong emotional connection the ex-Servicemen shared, their unspoken understandings, and the sense of shared knowingness they experienced by being in each other's presence (Bulmer and Jackson 2016). This encouraged R to adopt a more dialogical approach (Smith et al. 2009) to working with her participants. Throughout the informal conversations (including telephone conversations) with the ex-servicemen, as well as during the focus group interviews and in writing up her findings, R sought to adopt the 'practice of speaking with and to rather than speaking for' (Alcoff 1991: 23) her participants. Through this dialogical approach and the emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) she undertook throughout the research process, R sought to listen carefully and to empathise with the men; she embraced different ways of knowing and allowed herself to become transformed by their stories (see also Bulmer and Jackson 2016). Learning on the job is an important part of any research process and researcher role, however, this situation did bring into stark relief whether 'training' in dealing with sensitive issues in research, such as PTSD, might, with hindsight, have been useful, especially for a young researcher with limited life experience. In our concluding thoughts, we further consider empathy, and particularly the limits of empathy, in the research process.

To promote further dialogue and to avoid misunderstanding and misrepresenting the men's experiences, R invited participants to become active collaborators in the research process (Caddick et al. 2017), by reading and discussing R's initial understanding and interpretation of the data, including the military terminology used by the men. Later on in the research process, a draft summary report of the key findings was sent via email to all of the participants for their

comment. A few participants responded to R's email, they were complimentary about the research findings and did not feel that any changes needed to be made.

Concluding thoughts

This article contributes to a small, developing literature on reflexivity in military studies and research on military and ex-military personnel. We have charted some of the challenges, and also the opportunities, encountered by R, a young, female, civilian researcher, who undertook ethnographic research with 'older' retired servicemen. We also provide a brief table of key points and suggestions for women researchers (particularly 'newer' researchers) contemplating qualitative research in military-related environments, some of which are also applicable more generally:

Table 1 to be inserted here

When reviewing R's findings, we identified four key themes: 1) her positionality as a young, civilian, woman researcher; 2) managing distressing topics and interactional discomfort; 3) maintaining an 'ethic of care'; and 4) dilemmas regarding representational issues.

As noted above, one of the issues confronting those undertaking ethnographic research with participants for whom we feel (rather than follow institutional ethics boards' requirements for) an 'ethic of care', is engaging in empathic thinking and interaction, and imaginatively 'taking the role of the other', whilst also recognising the requirements of the professional researcher role and the limits of empathy. As has been argued (Frank 2005a, 2005b, 2012; Smith et al. 2009), empathy is important, and striving for empathy in qualitative research is a means, potentially, of increasing our understanding of others, engendering rapport, and generating deeper knowledge of the human condition. However, it is also important to recognise the *limits* of empathy, especially when empathy can easily turn into projection (Frank

2005a). In research, caution is needed so that 'taking the role of the other' and seeking temporarily to imagine what it would be like in 'another's shoes', does not slide into 'empathetic projection claims that you are as I am, and I *know* how you feel' (Frank 2005a: 299, emphasis in original). As noted above, sometimes it is necessary to take a step back and 'bracket' (Allen-Collinson 2011) assumptions, however well intentioned, that participants might find a topic too sensitive, difficult or distressing to discuss, and then close off the conversational space for them to talk about important issues. When George explained to R that he and the other RBL members did discuss sensitive issues such as PTSD between themselves, R then became reflexively aware of her own assumptions and presuppositions regarding the participants, and consequently revised her thinking and behaviour. In a similar way to McNarry and colleagues (2019), R found that reading other ethnographic accounts and engaging in ongoing bracketing discussions and reflections with supervisors and other 'critical friends' helped her to identify and address some of her pre-existing assumptions and presuppositions, and also the methods required for her to encourage the retired servicemen to share with her their embodied experiences.

Assuming as a researcher that 'I know how you feel' verges on arrogance, which is ironic, given that being empathetic is part of the trade craft of ethnographic work. The main difficulty of being in the field is one of trying to maintain an 'equilibrium' (Dewey 1980: 12) with the surrounding environment, which demands a constant balancing of responses to research participants, based on judgments being made time after time as interaction ensues with different individuals who are members of particular groups. This is where the alertness to task lies. The act of 'projection', noted above, would constitute an example of interaction failing that test of balance. The challenge for the researcher is that interaction is continuously ongoing and in reality we cannot push the rewind or 'slo mo' button, so as to calculate our responses in a slower, reflective fashion. The metaphorical position of the researcher needs to be one of being

'on one's toes', so as to be poised to respond swiftly, in an appropriate fashion, to further research aims and ensure care for participants. When attempting to explore and understand a lifeworld (the militarised lifeworld in this case), the task at hand is one of trying to understand both its main parameters, but also its nuances. What R learnt, during the research process, was slowly and incrementally to feel her way into the particular social world that was opening up before her.

References

Adler, P. and Adler, P. 1989. "The gloried self: The aggrandisement and the constriction of the self." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52 (4): 299-310. doi: 10.2307/2786993.

Alcoff, L. 1991. "The problem of speaking for others." *Cultural Critique* 20: 5–32. doi: 10.2307/1354221.

Allen-Collinson, J. 2011. "Assault on self: Intimate partner abuse and the contestation of identity." *Symbolic Interaction* 34 (1): 108–127. doi: 10.1525/si.2011.34.1.108.

Allen-Collinson, J. 2013. "Autoethnography as the engagement of self/other, self/culture, self/politics, selves/future." In *Handbook of Autoethnography*, edited by S. Holman Jones, T. E. Adams and C. Ellis, 281-199. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Allen-Collinson, J. and Hockey, J. 2001. "Runners' tales: autoethnography, injury and narrative." *Auto/biography*, IX (1 & 2): 95–106.

Allen-Collinson, J and Hockey, J. 2007. "'Working out' identity: Distance runners and the management of disrupted identity." *Leisure Studies* 26 (4): 381–398. doi: 10.1080/02614360601053384.

Armed Forces. 2018. "The Mission of the Armed Forces." Retrieved 02 May 2018 (http://www.armedforces.co.uk/mod/listings/l0002.html).

Atherton, S. 2016. "Researching Military Men." In *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods,* edited by A. Williams, K.N. Jenkings, M.F. Rech and R. Woodward, 243-255. London, Routledge.

Basham, V.M. and Bulmer, S. 2017. "Critical Military Studies as Method: An Approach to Studying Gender and the Military." In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military,* edited by R. Woodward and C. Duncanson, 59-71. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Bell, S. L. and Wheeler, B.W. 2015. "Local environments and activity in later life: Meaningful experiences in green and blue spaces." In *Physical activity and sport in later life*, edited by E. Tulle and C. Phoenix, 161-174. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Ben Ari, E. 1998. *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit*, Oxford: Berghahn.

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social Research Methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bucerius, S. M. 2013. "Becoming a "Trusted Outsider" gender, ethnicity, and inequality in ethnographic research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 42 (6): 690-721. doi: 10.1177/0891241613497747.

Bulmer, S. and Jackson, D. 2016. "'You do not live in my skin': Embodiment, voice and the veteran". *Critical Military Studies* 2 (1–2): 25–40. doi: 10.1080/23337486.2015.1118799.

Caddick, N., Cooper, A. and Smith, B. 2017. "Reflections on Being a Civilian Researcher in an Ex-Military World: Expanding Horizons?." *Critical Military Studies*, 1-20. doi: 10.1080/23337486.2017.1345545.

Carreiras, H. and Castro, C. 2016. *Qualitative methods in military studies: Research experiences and challenges.* London: Routledge.

Carrieras, H. and Caetano, A. 2016. "Reflexivity and the sociological study of the military." In *Researching the Military*, edited by H. Carrieras, C. Castro and S. Frederic, 8–22. Routledge, Abingdon.

Carroll, K. 2013. "Infertile? The Emotional Labour of Sensitive and Feminist Research Methodologies." *Qualitative Research* 13 (5): 546-561. doi: 10.1177/1468794112455039.

Cooley, C.H. 1998. *On Self and Social Organization*. 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Crowley, J.E. 2007. “Friend or Foe? Self-expansion, Stigmatized Groups and the Researcher-Participant Relationship.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36 (6): 603-630. doi: 10.1177/0891241606293603.

Dewey, J. 1980. *Art as Experience*, London: Perigree

Dickson-Swift, V., James E., Kippen S. and Liamputtong. 2009. “Researching Sensitive Topics: Qualitative Research as Emotion Work.” *Qualitative Research* 9 (1): 61–79. doi: 10.1177/1468794108098031.

Enloe, C. 2015. “The recruiter and the sceptic: A critical feminist approach to military studies.” *Critical Military Studies* 1 (1): 3–10. doi: 10.1080/23337486.2014.961746.

Finch, H. and Lewis, J. 2003. “Focus groups.” In *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers,* edited by J. Ritchie and J. Lewis, 170-198. London, Sage.

Finlay, L. 2006. “The Body's Disclosure in Phenomenological Research.” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (1): 19-30. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp051oa.

Frank. A. 2005a. “Generosity, Care, and a Narrative Interest in Pain.” In *Narrative, Pain, and Suffering,* Vol. 34, edited by D. Carr, J. Loeser and D. Morris, 289-300. Seattle: IASP Press.

Frank. A. 2005b. “What is Dialogical Research, and Why Should We Do It?” *Qualitative Health Research* 15: 964-974. doi: 10.1177/1049732305279078.

Frank, A.W. 2012. “Practicing dialogical narrative analysis.” In *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*, edited by J. A. Holstein and J. F. Gubrium, 33–52. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Goffman, A. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goffman, E. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York: Doubleday.

Goffman, E. 1967. *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior.* New York: Anchor Books.

Gratton, C. and Jones, I. 2010. *Research Methods for Sports Studies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Greenwood, L. 2017. “Qualitative Approaches to Researching Gender and the Military.” In *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military,* edited by R. Woodward and C. Duncanson, 89-104. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Gurney, J.N. 1985. “Not one of the Guys: The Female Researcher in a Male-dominated Setting.” *Qualitative Sociology* 8 (1): 42-62.

Hochschild, A. R. 1983. *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hockey, J. 1986. *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Hockey, J. 2016. "The Aesthetic of Being in the Field: Participant Observation With Infantry.", In *The Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods* **,** edited by A.J. Williams, K.N. Jenkings, M.F. Rech and R. Woodward, 207-218. London : Routledge.

Irwin, A. 2012. "There Will Be a Lot of Old Young Men Going Home". In *Young Men In Uncertain Times,* edited by V. Amit and N. Dyck , 58-78. Berghahn, Oxford.

Jaffe, A. (1995) "The Limits of Detachment: A Non-Ethnography of the Military." *National Association for the Practice of Anthropology Bulletin* 16 (1): 36-47. doi: 10.1525/napa.1995.16.1.36

James, N. 1989. "Emotional Labour: Skill and Work in the Social Regulation of Feelings." *Sociological Review* 37 (1): 15-42. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.1989.tb00019.x

Jenkings, N.K., Woodward, R. and Winter, T. 2008. "The emergent production of analysis in photo elicitation: Pictures of military identity." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 9 (3). doi: 10.17169/fqs-9.3.1169.

Jenkings, N., Woodward, R., Williams, A.J., Rech, M.F., Murphy, A.L. and Bos, D. 2011. "Military Occupations: Methodological Approaches and the Military-Academy Research Nexus." *Sociology Compass* 5 (1): 37-51.

King, A. 2006. “The Word of Command: Communication and Cohesion in the Military.” *Armed Forces & Society* 32 (4): 493-512.

MacLeish, K.T. 2012. “Armor and Anesthesia: Exposure, Feeling, and the Soldier’s Body.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26 (1): 49-68.

McNarry, G., Allen-Collinson, J. and Evans, A.B. 2019. “Reflexivity and Bracketing in Sociological Phenomenological Research: Researching the Competitive Swimming Lifeworld.” *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise & Health* 11 (1): 38-51. doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2018.1506498.

Mead, G.H. 1934. *Mind, self and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Owton, H. 2016. *Sexual Abuse in Sport: A Qualitative Case Study*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Owton, H. and Allen-Collinson, J. 2014. “Close but not too close: Friendship as method(ology) in ethnographic research encounters.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 43 (3): 283-305. doi 10.1177/0891241613495410.

Pipping, K. 1947, 2008. *Infantry Company as a Society*, edited by P. Kekale. Helsinki: Finish National Defence University.

Plummer, K. 2001. *Documents of Life 2*: *An Invitation to a Critical Humanism*. London: Sage.

Rech, M., Bos, D., Jenkings, K. N., Williams, A. and Woodward, R. 2015. "Geography, military geography, and critical military studies." *Critical Military Studies* 1 (1): 47–60. doi: 10.1080/23337486.2014.963416.

Schwalbe, M., and M. Wolkomir. 2002. "Interviewing Men." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research: Context and Method*, edited by J. Gubrium and J. Holstein, 203–220. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sparkes, A.C. and Smith, B. 2014. *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health: From Process to Product*. London: Routledge.

The Royal British Legion. 2018. "Live on." Retrieved May 02 2018 (https://www.britishlegion.org.uk).

Tortorello, F.J. 2010. *An Ethnography of 'Courage' Among U.S. Marines.* PhD dissertation, University of Illinois.

Wilkinson, S. 1998. “Focus Groups in Feminist Research: Power, Interaction and the Co-Production of Meaning.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 21(1): 111-25. doi: 10.1016/S0277-5395(97)00080-0.

Wilkinson, J. and Eacott, S. 2013. “‘Outsiders within’? Deconstructing the Educational Administration Scholar.” *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 16 (2): 191-204. doi: 10.1080/13603124.2012.750762.

Williams, R., Allen-Collinson, J., Hockey, J. and Evans, A. 2018. “‘You’re just chopped off at the end’: Retired servicemen’s identity work struggles in the military to civilian transition.” *Sociological Research Online*. doi: 10.1177%2F1360780418787209.

Woodward, K. 2008. “Hanging Out and Hanging About: Insider/Outsider Research in the Sport of Boxing.” *Ethnography* 9 (4): 536-60. doi: 10.1177/1466138108096991.

Table 1: Key points and suggestions for women researchers (particularly ‘newer’ researchers) undertaking research in military-related environments

Bracketing	Engaging in bracketing and ongoing critical reflection is important throughout the entire research process to help researchers challenge their assumptions, including around gender and stereotypical constructions of masculinity, soldiering and military life
Researcher positionality and presentation of self	Women researchers in particular may need to think carefully about how their own positionality and presentation of self could potentially have an impact on military/ex-military participants’ behaviour and ways of engaging with the research. Personal reflective notes can heighten reflexivity and provide an additional layer of data collection (see also McNarry et al. 2019).
Terminology	As with any occupational group, specialised terminology is likely to be used by military/ex-

	military participants. Researchers might therefore consider familiarising themselves with basic military terminology before entering the field, in order to avoid undue interruption to the interactional flow. See for example the glossary by Hockey (1986: 162-172) on infantry terminology and argot.
Training	Whilst learning on the job is a key part of any research process, if researchers are likely to encounter particularly challenging or highly sensitive topics (such as PTSD) when studying military/ex-military personnel, then specific training on how to deal with such sensitive issues could be beneficial.