

Emotional Labour, Feeling Powerless,
and Researcher Vulnerability:
Reflections on Ethnography with Team
UK Invictus 2023

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Exploring the Impact of the Invictus Games Düsseldorf 2023



IMAGE REDACTED



IMAGE REDACTED



IMAGE REDACTED

Where we started...

IMAGE REDACTED IMAGE REDACTED IMAGE REDACTED

experience = 0

Disabled



Women



Immigrants



Work we do is to serve marginalised groups, but marginalised groups have unique stories, experiences and 'solutions' to equity

For me – awkward ambivalence

Where They Started...

- 64% diagnosed mental health illness
- 66% two or more chronic conditions
- Loss of identity
- Perceive low resilience
- “If you’ve not been through it you just won’t get it”

“PTSD-sufferer”

“broken”

“un-deserving”

“a failure”

“EX-military”

IMAGE REDACTED

A Coming Together of Awkward

Introducing the team



Dr Don Vinson

Specialism in evaluation and Coach learning



Dr Emma Richardson

Specialism in adapted sport and exercise research



Dr Gabriela Misca

Specialism in military and veteran families research



Professor Győző Molnár

Specialism in sociology of sport and identity

“self-
superior”

“super-
woke”

“ivory
tower
dwellers”

“smelly
civvies”

“parasites”

“outsiders”

Why (or
why
wouldn't
they) think
that?!

Long and very chequered history of research done ON disabled communities by non-disabled researchers for own gain (Fitzgerald, 2009)

Previous experiences of being made to do research they didn't really want to do as they did not have power to say no

Experiences of commissioned officers with degrees "lording over" members without degrees

We do not come to research as empty vessels, and neither do participants

Where we are now

- “You guys are seriously part of the team”
 - “We’re so glad you’re coming”
 - “Research wankers!”
-
- How did we get there?

IMAGE REDACTED

IMAGE REDACTED

Vulnerable Observers (Baher, 1996, 2022)

- Researcher vulnerability essential part of ethnography
- Affect and are affected emotionally, physically, ontologically

“...vulnerability doesn't mean that anything personal goes. The exposure of the self as a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to. It has got to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake...”
(p.14)

IMAGE REDACTED

Sharing Our Transparent Selves

- Vulnerability is a shared ontological condition – to ask participants to be vulnerable, we must be vulnerable ourselves (Rodgers et al., 2012)

IMAGE REDACTED

Being A Grunt

- “Finally, a practical job academics can do!”

IMAGE REDACTED

(Re)Interpreting 'Ethical' Rules

- “When we privilege highly bureaucratized protocols over human-to-human communications, we risk an erasure of humanity of everyone involved in research” (Lake & Hartmann, 2023)

IMAGE REDACTED

Broken Just Like Us!

- “That’s why you were the perfect people for the job. You’re broken just like us!”

IMAGE REDACTED

What were
the costs of
vulnerability?

Relationships

Triggering own
traumas

Guilt

Weight of
responsibility

Carrying 'feels' with
us

All the emotions!

Hobbies and past
times

Burnout

Injury

We'd rather be a good people than good researchers, but it's a shame we sometimes have to choose.

IMAGE REDACTED

References and Image Credits

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