Reflexive methodologies: An autoethnography of the gendered performance of sport/management

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Abstract
Autoethnography has emerged as a relatively new methodological approach within the fields of leisure, sport and tourism studies and more broadly within the social sciences. As a reflexive methodology it offers the beginning and experienced researcher a means of critically exploring the social forces that have shaped their own involvement in leisure practices and subsequent professional careers. In this article we discuss the significance of autoethnography as it was utilised by the first author in her student research on women’s participation in cricket and the management dilemmas within this sport. The process involved recollecting, writing and re-reading experiences in light of feminist theories that explore the performance of gender through sport. The second author’s involvement in the project is discussed in terms of the relational, supervisory context that can foster writing of the self into research within honours and post-graduate programs. In this way the writing practices that mediate knowledge produced about leisure or sport are made transparent and foregrounded within the research process itself. The autoethnographic approach used in this article contributes to the emergent methodological literature that embraces the textual or narrative turn within qualitative studies of leisure and sport.
Introduction
Autoethnography has emerged as a relatively new methodological approach within sport and leisure research and more broadly within the social sciences (Denzin, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 1992). Debates surrounding the crisis of representation in social theory and research have contributed to the textual turn within leisure studies that is now evident within a range of qualitative methods and forms of theoretical analysis (Fullagar, 2002; Markula and Pringle, 2006; Parry and Johnson, 2007; Rinehart, 2005; Rowe, 2006; Sparkes, 2002). As an autobiographical genre of writing, autoethnographies are usually written in a first-person voice that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellis, 2004). As a reflexive methodology it offers the researcher a means of critically exploring the social forces and discursive practices that have shaped their own involvement in leisure and sport and subsequent professional careers (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Ellis and Bochner 2000). Using one’s own experience for research purposes provides a unique opportunity for leisure and sport management students to reflect upon what they bring to their professional roles and how they may engage with professional cultures to bring about social change. In this way autoethnography offers a method through which academic supervisors can encourage honours and post-graduate students to write themselves into research and also make the reading-writing relations of knowledge production more transparent (Game, 1991). In doing so students can problematise the power relations that shape their own leisure related identities, performances and managerial authority exercised in relation to the ‘freedom’ of others (leisure participants, consumers, citizens etc).

In this article we discuss the significance of autoethnography as a method utilised by the first author in beginning her student research into the declining participation in Queensland women’s (aged 25-35 years) representative indoor cricket and the management dilemmas within this non-traditional sport. The second author’s involvement in the project is discussed in terms of the relational, supervisory context that can be used to foster the writing of the self into research within honours and post-graduate programs. We include the first author’s autoethnography as it is written through memories that reveal the gendered performance of multiple identities (player, coach and manager) within the discursive field of cricket. Given the many permutations of authoethnographic research in this article we draw explicitly upon feminist and post-structuralist perspectives to explore the question of how power is exercised in relation to women’s performance of gendered sporting identities (see also Markula and Pringle, 2006, on masculinity and sport). This approach explores how the institutional
structures and cultures of sport intersect with gender norms that mediate the experience of femininity, embodiment and sexuality (Weedon, 1987). In different instances these norms can either reiterate, or contest, the masculine culture of cricket. To conclude the article we reflect on the process and analytic utility of autoethnography as a means of further developing students’ theoretical understanding. Our aim is to contribute to the methodological literature in leisure and sport studies through the writing of an autoethnographic account and the process involved. In using a feminist research approach we also seek to make visible the gendered performance of sport/management for students, professionals and researchers in the field.

**Autoethnography as a reflexive methodology**

The process of reflection is the means through which a reflexive method of self inquiry is produced. When we critically reflect we consider the premises for our thoughts, observations and our use of language (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). For Sterier (1991a : 245) ‘the core of reflection (reflexivity) consists of an interest in the way we construct ourselves socially while also constructing objects in our research, for without construction, and without constructing and constructed self, there is no meaning’. From a sociological perspective this involves thinking about ‘how’ certain social forces or power relations shape what one does, how one thinks about one’s identity and responds to the expectations of others within the context of sport or leisure. Many feminist writers have long advocated that starting research from one’s own experiences helps to reposition the personal sphere as also political (Haug, 1987, Stanley 1990). Reflective techniques enable significant sport experiences to be remembered, problematised and written in narrative form. In this article we present a narrative of the sporting self that offers a means of exploring gender and power relations within cricket as a historically masculine pursuit and professional domain. Rather than presuming to offer a coherent account of identity the autoethnographic narrative presented here is written through fragments of time that have been ordered chronologically to reflect the continuity of the author’s desire for sport. It is a personal story that also works as an academic analysis by virtue of being informed by theoretical texts that explore the performance of gendered subjectivity (Butler, 1990; Wearing, 1998). There are a multitude of ways of writing narratives of self that utilise different literary techniques and styles that include; personal essays, chronological or non-linear structures, fictionalised stories and a variety of authorial speaking positions (Bruce, 2000; Richardson, 1998). The story we present here has moved through a number of iterations involving different stylistic techniques, collaborative reflection.
and analysis that also incorporated the insights of others, such as, reviewers of this article and thesis examiners.

The techniques of feminist memory work were used to help produce and structure the personal narrative as the autoethnographic text. Memory work is concerned with how individual women construct their personal and collective identity through the structures and practices of society (Haug, 1987). As a means of remembering through writing this technique documents the ways in which women perform femininity within the everyday relations of sport, thereby reproducing a social formation that may contribute to, or challenge, oppressive gender relations (Haug, 1987). Duquin (2000) argues that the memory work involved in writing autoethnographic accounts offers a powerful method of investigating the importance of emotion as part of identity formation in sport:

Memory is tied to emotion; feelings make events significant. In memory work, replaying past emotions reveals the forces and everyday events that helped shape self-identity…Memory work reveals how emotions are socialised in sport and how individuals can become active agents in constructing their emotional lives. One major advantage of such methodology is that personal memory work exposes the complex interaction of various social statuses (for example, class, gender, sexuality) in the emotional patterning of individual lives. (Duquin, 2000: 480-481)

The memory work of autoethnography is also significant in producing a different kind of knowledge relation between the writer and reader of the story. The practice of reading stories of the sporting self becomes part of an intersubjective experience that can connect the ‘research’ with the reader’s recollections of their own and others’ experience. As Bochner and Ellis note, good autoethnographies inspire a different way of reading, ‘It isn’t meant to be consumed as knowledge or received passively…On the whole, autoethnographers do not want you to sit back as spectators; they want readers to feel, care and desire’ (1996: 24). This approach calls on readers to engage with the text as a fiction of the self that invites reflection on the particularity and universality of sport or leisure experiences (Sparkes, 2002). Hence, it reflects a post-structuralist view that emphasises the interaction of the reader and the text as a co-production of knowledge that can effect transformations in thinking and feeling (Game, 1991). Writing the self through stories of sport enables the relationships between language, gendered subjectivity and the norms of sporting culture to be made visible and subject to
change (Weedon, 1987). Writing moves from being conventionally positioned as a ‘representation of the real world’ to an academic practice that mediates, affects and engages in the creation of different knowledges of leisure or sport experience (Parry and Johnson, 2007). In this way the writing-reading relations of knowledge are made transparent and foregrounded within the research process so that students can appraise the academic conventions that govern the field and their own practices. We revisit the issue of supervision after the autoethnographic account that follows and discuss its analytic utility within academic and professional fields. To contextualise the story, the first author writes from the position of being an Honours student in her late 30’s having returned to study after fifteen years in sport management. She reflects back on key memories in order to make sense of the gender relations and embodied experiences that shaped her identity through sport.

An Autoethnographic Account

Growing up with Cricket

The childhood smell of linseed oil and the aroma of my cricket kit evokes an idealised time when sport was the most important thing in my life. From the age of eight I lived for Wednesday afternoon training and wished away the wee week to wake up early on Saturday mornings in anticipation of what the day in cricket was to hold. Dressed in my cricket ‘whites’, I waited for the coach to pick me up.

“Will I score a hundred, hit a six or be bowled first ball?”

Travelling to the game was an in-between space that intensified the shift from home to this other world that was cricket. This ritual transformed the mundane school week and opened up possibilities beyond the everydayness of small town rural life. Opportunities in the town curtailed the types of sport and leisure activities I could pursue. Typical gender choices were offered; football and cricket for boys or netball and social events for girls. It was a whirl of tea parties, dolls, dress ups, boyfriends and endless chatter that I figured served only to distract girls from the adventure of sport.

“Watch what you wear, be polite, sit still and keep yourself nice dear”

I slipped out the back, hid round the corner and escaped into the rough and tumble physicality of ‘Cowboys and Indians’ with the boys.
Girly Girl or Tomboy?

Being a tomboy, rather than a ‘girly girl’, I longed for the adventure of riding my bike, yabbying, or playing cricket and football with the neighbourhood boys. Few other girls dared to join us and seeing the scar on my left knee now reminds me of why.

“Charmaine, are you all right?”

Through the dust I recognise Tim’s voice, my next door neighbour. He leans over me, curious to see if I have much skin missing or maybe a broken bone. It hurts like mad, but a fall off my bike is not going to keep me from finding the secret yabby spot.

“Let’s go Tim, we need to catch up to everyone else.”

Always endeavouring to catch up, keep up, be as good as or maybe one day beat the boys. But girls were required to wear dresses and netball skirts for physical education and sport. There was no choice about it; your body was the vehicle of feminine display. Netball and cricket skirts restricted the way I dived to catch a ball in front of others. Uniforms signified gender compliance and also rebellion against being forced into being a certain kind of girl. Johnno, my high school cricket coach, always started training sessions with catching practice.

“C’mon Charmaine, dive for that ball, what’s wrong with you?”

“Johnno, can I just get out of this skirt? Let me change into my shorts?”

“Don’t be stupid all the other girls are doing the drill. Just do it.”

“I am not like the other girls.”

I wanted to play so I followed the drills. There were new challenges to be confronted in the practice nets in front of the fast bowlers. My hands started to sweat and my knees shook slightly in anticipation of the delivery and how I would play the ball.

Years later sitting in the dressing room, putting on my shorts to play my last superleague match the memories came flooding back; the “skirt shall be worn” dictum of school sport that made so many of us cringe, feeling shamefully exposed. Magically things changed once I could don a pair of shorts. The painful self-conscious performance of femininity was left behind in my rush to embrace the full pleasure of physicality in the game.

To Hair or Not to Hair

“I looked around the hairdresser’s shop filling up with noisy team members. Where are Sam and Nick? Let’s get them in here, we haven’t got all day the game starts in an hour.”

Before each superleague match I would persuade my team mates to get their hair spiked with the reassurance that they would play an infinitely better game. I enjoyed this pre-
game preparation of putting on the war paint to psyche up against the opposition. It was a collective practice of resignifying femininity by subverting the hair rituals of girlhood. I can still hear my mother yelling.

“Hurry up and fix your hair, you will be late for school.”

At primary school my sisters did my hair in plaits and ribbons. Each morning it was a continuous tug of war as they brushed my hair and untangled the knots in the desire to present me to the world as a pretty little girl.

“If you don’t sit still, I will cut it all off”.

At last, a way out of the daily torture. Having long hair interfered with my capacity to play sport. By age twelve I had short hair and have worn it this way ever since. It symbolised a break away from the normalised binds of femininity and I was able to focus on captaining my cricket team.

*Gender Collision*

I pursued cricket with the support of my family who acknowledged my talent and ability. My brother David, a passionate sportsperson, constantly encouraged me to challenge the norms of the day and play sport, including rugby league and cricket.

“Don’t worry about what other people think, you have the ability and you enjoy the game, so play.”

I measured my success against his and this raised the standard of my cricket.

However, even from an early age sport and gender expectations collided, opening up alternative possibilities that shaped my sense of self through an active sporting identity. My first significant experience of gender inequity occurred at the age of thirteen when I was told that I could no longer play in the rugby league team. The coach sheepishly approached me at training,

“Look although you’re a good player, you’re at an age where the boys are ‘naturally’ much stronger and suited to playing the game. You can no longer play, sorry.”

I crashed heavily into the glass wall of junior sport, gutted by the assumptions.

“Why can’t girls keep playing rugby league, why do boys have all the fun?”

My body was changing shape and I assumed this emerging femininity was considered unsuitable for physical contact sport. This turning point revealed the pervasive effects of ‘essentially different’ discourses about the gendered body that constrained me from playing. Yet, it did not work to completely exclude me. I continued to challenge these naturalising discourses through the performance of cricket.
My cricket success started to be widely recognised at high school. I was selected in the high school girls’ team and received the junior sports award that year. Supportive interactions with my male coach and the senior women’s captain affirmed my sporting identity. One of the highlights of my cricket career was being named the captain of the Under 16 team (with eight boys and three girls) that played in the Saturday morning competition.

There were ongoing power struggles. The boys tried to undermine my decisions about field placements and the bowling order, as they often felt I made the wrong decision. Mark, the Vice-Captain tried to divide in the team; my crew were planning a mutiny. In front of the team he proclaimed,

“What would you know, you’re only a girl.”

It would have been easy to walk away but I had so much invested, it made me even more strong willed. I learned to stand by my decisions and when we won a match the tables turned. Post-game meetings were a perfect opportunity to make the point,

“Maybe a girl’s opinion is worth listening to.”

Laughter filled the room. Simon, a bowler spoke up, “Yeah today you made some pretty good tactical decisions, and it helped me get three wickets.” Some of the team gave him a shove for being so big headed; the mutiny had passed.

One of the boys(?)

Once the boys recognised my identity as a cricket player at the age of fourteen they saw me as ‘like them’ as a ‘mate’ rather than a potential girlfriend. My gender identity and femininity were shaped around my sporting prowess, which challenged the discursive forms of ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ sporting behaviour expected from teenage girls. Most of my girlfriends were playing netball as it was seen as an appropriate sport, not too physical or aggressive. My sporting success enabled the performance of a different feminine identity that did not rely on heteronormative rewards linked to being the object of masculine desire. Instead, winning, competence, pleasure in competition and strength were other rewards I gained from sport.

On a Monday morning I crawled out of bed stiff and sore from a week at the Regional School Girl Cricket competition. As I stepped on to the bus there was a huge colourful banner pasted on the window congratulating me on my sporting performance. At school the Principal held a special assembly to recognise my team’s success. This small rural school validated
young women’s participation in sport and thus affirmed and made visible my identity in
relation to others; peers, teachers and family members.

“Keep going, push yourself, just one more repetition.”

The gym instructor urges me to keep pumping the weights, working on my upper
body and leg strength to enhance my cricketing performance. I am exhausted sweat running
down my face, my muscles ache but I find the strength to finish the workout. Feeling good I
stroll past the mirror and notice the muscle shape that is developing as desired.

But my body also becomes a site of discursive struggle as I move beyond the
normalised boundaries of corporeal ‘femininity’. The female body is invested with gendered
meanings that reproduce an inferiorised notion of sexual difference. Women are weak, not
strong; they should play sports that accommodate such difference. When women fail, or are
unable to cite corporeal femininity, the body is read differently. In other words, they are
excluded from the category ‘woman’ and are not recognised as ‘women’. Team mates often
remarked on my changing body,

“Where did Charmaine go? I didn’t know we had Arnie Schwarzenegger playing in
our team tonight.”

Embodying sporting success through cricket positioned me outside of normalised
femininity and not quite accepted within the masculine culture either- a kind of third space
where the meaning of gender was open to revision. Cricket created challenging experiences
and opened up career opportunities that would have remained unknown to me, as a woman, if
my childhood passion had not been encouraged by family members, coaches and my school’s
sporting philosophy.

*Indoor Cricket: The Intensification of Gender Difference*

In combination with outdoor cricket I started playing indoor cricket when I was in
high school and found the game to be a new challenge. Eight of us squeeze into the coach’s
Tarago van for the hour long drive, laughing and joking all the way about how easy it will be.
Our nonchalance was short lived,

“You mean we only run to half way and the ball deflects off the nets in any
direction?”

The indoor game was faster and more exciting. It heightened my desire to be selected
at the representative level during college and I continued to play when I took up my first job
as a junior indoor cricket co-ordinator. Occasionally spectator sledging occurred at matches
and I would be gender stereotyped. This usually happened if I showed some form of
aggression or gesture towards the opposing team. Comments about my style of play or appearance would echo around the court.

“She plays like she has balls…I thought this was the women’s game, not a men’s game.”

I worked hard to ignore the double standards. I was a caged tiger at the zoo, pacing up and down inside the nets, waiting for my next prey – the new batswoman. In the match verbal sledging was part of a complex power game we commonly used to test the metal of opposition players. If the batter missed the ball in consecutive deliveries, as the wicketkeeper, I would catch it and glare. In a voice loud enough only for the batter and my team-mates to hear I’d slip out a comment,

“I’ve seen better bats in a cave.”

My team-mates would snigger and circle the carcass, move in for the kill. Up front fielders would clap and yell before the next delivery,

“Let’s go Junior, this batter has no idea.”

For the male players this sport behaviour was seen as only natural, unlike the ‘ladies’ team. As a result I used to struggle with holding in-check my behaviour on the court. This meant that I did not always play to my full potential and the enjoyment of the game was often diminished.

*Out or In?*

Challenging gender norms through cricket has meant I have been subjected to heterosexist stereotyping. Normalised assumptions about heterosexuality as ‘naturally’ superior to homosexuality pervaded the sport culture (Mason, 2002). In everyday conversations about cricket I often confronted negative judgements and questions about my sexuality.

“So you like to date girls then?”

I was taken back by the sense of entitlement people felt they had to make such comments. I learnt to dismiss them, to move the conversation away from myself as the object of curiosity. Women are often subjected to sexual stereotyping and are typecast as ‘butch dykes’ for playing men’s sport (Caudwell, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994; Lenskyi, 1986; Theberge, 2000). While some women reclaim the word ‘dyke’ as an alternative identity, it becomes an instrument of homophobia when used to denigrate lesbian femininity. This was no different for me as I reached my College years. There were times that I would admit to being ‘out’ and then other times I would stay ‘in’ the closet. The extent in which I disclosed my sexuality
varied in relation to the people with whom I socialised. I was comfortable being out with the ‘girls from cricket’ as it was a culture that accepted difference. I remember the different kind of identity negotiations that occurred at cricket.

“Well, what side of the fence do you sit on?”

In response to the bewildered and blushing look on my face she quickly replied,

“It doesn’t matter to us as long as you play the game well and accept everyone for who they are.”

In heterosexual groups of people where being gay was not the ‘norm’, I would stay ‘in’ the closet, as many of them were homophobic. I experienced many instances of heterosexism when playing in predominantly heterosexual teams that rendered my identity invisible or morally suspect. Jokes and innuendo about gays and lesbians permeated the change rooms in many different sports. The captain of my soccer team once made comments about the opposing team after a match,

“I bet you five bucks on who the straight ones are… “Did we just play the men’s team out there?”

Laughter and comments continued, I sat there avoiding eye contact with anyone. In fear of being ostracised and misunderstood I stayed silent and ‘passed’ as heterosexual. Sport is risky; the injuries are often hidden in the constant negotiation of gender and sexual identity.

In contrast when I was at College the culture of women’s cricket did provide a relatively safe social space for players who chose not, or were unable or unwilling, to conform to ‘compulsory’ heterosexuality and heterosexual femininity (Caudwell, 2004). We would spend a lot of time together training, playing and then socialising at the local pub and nightclubbing. This was an instance in which gay women challenged the conspicuous ‘heterosexing of the spaces they use’ (Caudwell, 2004). Wearing (1998) argues that leisure spaces where sport and drinking occur tend to reinforce masculine territoriality and the dominance of masculine values as natural and normal. Yet, they are also spaces open to contestation by inferiorised groups who refuse to be excluded on the basis of gender or sexuality.

*Cricket, Career or Both*

Like many students in leisure and sport management my dream was to be able to combine my passion for cricket with a career in sport. Playing indoor cricket started out as a fun way to improve my skills for outdoor cricket, but when my professional career began within an indoor sports centre I took the game more seriously. Part of my job description in
the early days of managing was to be a role model and positive influence on juniors and my superleague team-mates. I then moved into a senior management position which involved working closely with the male owner/manager. It was my first experience of gender inequality and the masculine culture of indoor sport centre management. I began to express my opinions at zone meetings about how certain issues should be dealt with in relation to the structure and promotion of women’s cricket. Most of my comments were ignored or trivialised by the men attending these meetings.

“I think that the current structure of superleague needs to be revamped to encourage more women to play.”

“What would you know about what is best for women’s cricket? Most of us are successful centre owners and we have tried different strategies to promote women’s sport, but nothing works.”

Women players were the problem, not the structure of the competition or the lack of management support. I struggled to make myself and the gender issues visible in a different way.

The centre owner gave me some direction about how he wanted it to be run as a profitable commercial enterprise. As time went on, however, I was given virtually free reign to do what I thought best as long as the centre continued to generate profit and our team numbers grew. I focussed on increasing the number of representative women playing indoor cricket and as a result the centre developed a successful reputation for women’s cricket.

After eight years I left this position and took on a new challenge as the inaugural manager of a multi-purpose complex in a remote mining town. Several power struggles eventuated in this position. My decisions about the coordination of activities at the centre were continually judged by some of the men on the management committee who viewed women as inferior to themselves. Doubts were raised whenever I implemented new ideas and strategies to create a financially viable sports centre. My marketing strategies were questioned in relation to getting families involved in the centre.

“Do you think that’s really the right thing to do?”

My authority undermined again, despite having professional qualifications and experience within the management of multi-sports centres. Why was I surprised, it was just an extension of the discursive field of sport that had shaped my life for years. Although the majority of people worked well with me, there were some men who were flabbergasted that I could play indoor cricket competitively. They challenged me over certain rules and
procedures. They ignored the gender rule on bowling more slowly to women in mixed games and searched out the body line. I felt the intensity like a growing menace.

“In the game tonight the men will be after me, all fired up to bowl me out, hoping not be outdone by a woman. A lump forms in my throat, I swallow awkwardly. How long will it take for them to accept me as a fellow player and not as a threat?”

After three years I returned to the city to manage the centre I had left. My previous boss waited until I had built the business up before he sold it to a new owner who was very much one of the ‘boys’ and made my job difficult. I experienced sexism on more than one occasion. The inaugural golf day was held for the whole centre but the women were not even invited to participate. Sport has been singled out as an area in which women experience discrimination as a result of what sport sociologists have termed ‘corporate masculinity’ and the ‘locker room culture’ (McKay, 1996).

As a centre manager there were times when I needed to enforce certain rules and make decisions about the competition. I sensed that certain players felt I was a ‘bitch’. However, if the male owner made the same decision he was regarded as approaching the problem in the direct manner. I also faced issues of trying to maintain and enhance the number of women indoor cricket players. At one stage I was told to;

“Stop wasting your time and just concentrate on the men’s cricket, it produces more revenue for the centre”.

These economic and gendered discourses had a negative influence on my decision-making about women’s cricket. They limited the amount of advertising and promotion I could direct towards the women’s competition. However, I found ways to subvert this by collaborating with the women players about what they wanted, giving them the right to be heard. I quickly learnt about the powerful effect of these masculine codes of sport management that governed gender relations on and off the field. Ironically, the resolve I developed to challenge the gendered rules of sport management emerged from years of embodying the struggles and competitive pleasures that are central to the game itself.

**The Analytic Utility of the Autoethnographic Approach**

Exploring this narrative of sport highlights the powerful effect of language and gender norms on shaping the performance and value of women’s sport identities (Weedon, 1987). Through my multiple identities as a cricket player, indoor sport manager and coach, I mobilised different discourses about gendered embodiment, sexual identity and sporting ability. The story gave voice to my experience as a player as I articulated my rights along with my fellow
team-mates for recognition in the sport alongside the men. The process enabled me to reflect
on how the women players actively challenged the dominant norms that shaped the culture of
indoor cricket as a ‘man’s’ sport, and created other ways of valuing women’s involvement in
the game. I recognised a key moment when the increased visibility of women’s sporting
ability was achieved through my ‘superleague’ cricket team winning matches. After several
rounds we were leading the competition and suddenly the men started to take an interest in
our team and to support our games. Ensuing conversations with the men would then revolve
around sporting technique as our playing ability and game tactics had become ‘visible’ to
them. The discursive field was shifting as men began to acknowledge the skill and
competitiveness involved in the performance of women’s indoor cricket. In light of this
example we argue that autoethnographic accounts can also work on another level to highlight
and circulate a range of counter discourses, and thus challenge the normative power relations
that underpin the discursive field of cricket and enable the production of new, resistant
meanings.

This autoethnographic account has drawn heavily on post-structural feminism to move
beyond a zero-sum notion of patriarchal power to examine the relational and discursive
workings of gendered power (Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1990, 1993; Weedon 1987). Its analytic
utility relates to how gender norms are shown as significant in mediating how others within
society, and more specifically how women themselves, make ‘thinkable’ their involvement in
non-traditional sport. As my narrative has demonstrated there is a variety of ways in which
gender is performed, and there still remain dominant sporting ideals that reinforce masculine
authority about women’s sport participation and leadership (Adams et al, 2005; Hargreaves,
1994; Shaw 1994). Butler (1990) shares Foucault’s conception of power as ever present in our
everyday interactions and this notion can be extended to sport administration and competition.
Butler importantly argues that power is not only prohibitive but also enables subversive
gender performances. Without such performativity in sport we would have no way of
becoming subjects, no way of exercising agency, no way of finding some activities desirable
and others not. Our gendered subjectivities are constructed out of sport practices but are not
reducible to them, there is always room for change and modification (Wearing, 1998). The
problematic posed here is that gender identity is never fixed and changes according to the
kind of sport performances and performances of sport management that women enact. Some
of these gender performances are rewarded and others negatively sanctioned according to
dominant practices and normalised values within sport institutions, hence the necessity of making these relations visible.

Supervision as a Reading-Writing Relation
To complete our discussion of the analytic utility of autoethnographic methods this section shifts the focus back to the supervision relation that enables reflexive student research. As a method for encouraging honours and post-graduate students to critically engage with their own experiences, the autoethnographic process provides a useful point of departure for further qualitative research with others and for encouraging theoretically informed analysis of everyday leisure or sport issues. Writing about one’s sporting self is a far more difficult task than it first appears to be with constant reflection required on writing style, levels of disclosure and working between conceptual and everyday registers. The supervision relationship works to mediate this research process as the supervisor is positioned as the primary ‘reader’ in what is the co-production of the student’s own written story (Green and Lee, 1999). It is learning-teaching relation with particular ethical and pedagogical parameters. Acknowledging the supervisor’s position of authority helps to make transparent the asymmetry of the student-teacher knowledge relation that is often reified through traditional ‘apprenticeship models’, or denied through ‘anti-hierarchical’ claims within the institutional context of higher education (Grant, 2005). The position of supervisor-reader opens up an in-between space where the focus of learning for each person centres on the student’s process of developing their own academic voice. Reading, however, is understood as a productive process in itself where the meaning of the student’s story is questioned in light of a shared exploration of conceptual issues. For example, the writing of Charmaine’s story involved ongoing discussion and written exploration of particular aspects of gendered subjectivity and sport as well as reflection on the writing itself. The story that emerged came out of this intertextual research process of remembering sport experiences within the supervision dynamic and engagement with particular theoretical texts. A different kind of story may well have resulted from the involvement of other supervisors or texts.

In the supervision relation, writing as the craft of research was emphasised as the process of creating knowledge. In this way writing through one’s gender and sport experiences enables the creation of different embodied knowledges (or subjugated knowledges in Foucault’s (1980) terms) that can produce a range of affects in readers (sympathy, outrage, guilt, disbelief, pleasure etc). This reading-writing relation can reverberate to mobilise other re-
writings of self and other forms of reflection that can be understood as transformations of knowledge in the present. Thus, from a feminist perspective autoethnographic writing can disrupt familiar, normalised ways of knowing women’s sport and open up possibilities for change. From a supervisor’s perspective this is the intellectually exciting aspect of engaging in different knowledge relations with students as they can generate novel insights or approaches to problems of gender inequality.

The process of supervising students using autoethnographic methods is also challenging because of the duel demands that creativity and rigour place on the creation of narrative; encouraging personal reflection, critical engagement and avoiding the trap of self-indulgent writing. To work effectively for both parties it involves an epistemological shift from conventional master/apprentice models towards more collaborative explorations where the student can exercise their intellectual autonomy (Bartlett and Mercer, 2000). This is not a matter of an ‘anything goes’ kind of writing, nor a naive form of reminiscence. Rather it is a critically engaged and self-disciplined form of reflective analysis that can generate awareness of the politics and ethics of representation for both student and supervisor. The focus on reading-writing also foregrounds the issue of ethics in all research processes – how one writes about the self (or others) and with others, how one reads and responds to the unfolding story of self with care. Supervision in this sense creates a discursive space through which ideas can be explored, discarded or rigorously pursued in relation to research questions, issues and aims. When reading and writing become central to the learning and teaching relations of supervision then academic research conventions are also made more transparent, less mysterious and thus knowledge practices are open to change.

**Conclusion**

Having reflected on the story presented in this article we argue that there is much potential for sport managers to use autoethnographic approaches to explore their own intertwined experiences of playing and administering sport as a means of improving professional practices (Denzin 1997; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). This research approach provides a deeper understanding of gendered power relations that could lead to change in human resource management, marketing, advertising, policy development and leadership training for sport and leisure management. Sport managers might reconsider their own stories, from the point of view of participants, or the stories of other groups different from themselves, which could generate greater empathy and impetus for change (Rinehart,
Managers could use this method to reflect on the gendered assumptions informing their own management style in relation to how they administer women’s sport. This is particularly important in light of the recent Australian Senate Committee findings that identify ongoing inequities relating to women and sport participation and leadership (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). For women graduates moving into leisure or sport management positions these insights are particularly useful in thinking about how institutional cultures and gender norms both enable and constrain social change agenda. The story offered in this article demonstrates how in one author’s fifteen year career as an indoor sport centre manager, the masculine culture of indoor cricket contributed to women being positioned as invisible, problematic and occasionally successful competitors. Leisure and sport administration roles are often characterised by gender related tensions arising from different passions, career aspirations and opportunities and entrenched codes of conduct (Aitchison 2005). As a qualitative research approach autoethnography offers leisure and sport management students a means of developing a critical understanding of how they are situated personally and professionally within the field. It also opens up different ways of writing through sport and leisure identities to explore the complex power relations that regulate freedom, participation and leadership. In addition, we have argued that the supervision relationship in honours and post-graduate programs is crucial to enabling students to develop the intellectual autonomy that is central to the telling of critically reflexive stories of sport and leisure.

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