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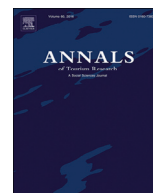
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# Creating feelings of inclusion in adventure tourism: Lessons from the gendered sensory and affective politics of professional mountaineering



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## ABSTRACT

Gender is consequential in adventure tourism, where women are systemically underrepresented. Despite significant attention to the affective experiences of tourists, the gendered differences produced through affective experiences, and their implications for inclusivity in adventure activities and places, has been little explored. To address this, we examine the sensory and emotional politics of grading professional women mountaineers' bodies, and its relationality with managing social and physical risk, through mobile video, interview and reflexive ethnography. We highlight the affective intensities of maintaining professional status, as regulated through prevailing masculine ideals, requiring women to perform significant emotional labour when working in high-risk environments by developing extreme strategies to alleviate stress. This elucidates how power-laden affective relations create and deny inclusion in adventure spaces.

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## Introduction

We know few women engage professionally with riskier forms of adventure tourism such as mountaineering or climbing (terms we use interchangeably), and that there is a paucity of women mountaineering guides (Evans & Anderson, 2018). Yet we understand too little of their experiences. This study seeks to address this by exploring the sensory and emotional experiences of professional women mountaineers and how these are governed, disciplined and constituted in gendered ways. The 22nd of May 2019 hit the headlines with the extraordinary image of over 220 people queuing to summit, Mount Everest (Arnette, 2019). Only 29 of these 220 were women, none were guides (R. Salisbury, Himalayan Mountain Trust, personal email, April 14, 2021). Despite a booming adventure tourism industry and the rapid commodification of high-altitude mountain places (Cater, 2013), it is striking that in the twenty-first century, so few women are represented. The statistics in this picture on Everest are echoed in the gender ratios of mountain guides more generally (Hunt, 2019).

Although significant attention has been paid to gender equality in the tourism sector, Ferguson and Alarcón (2015) argue that it has not been systematically integrated into tourism policy and practice, and attempts to do so have largely been superficial. In adventure tourism, this is acutely apparent where even a casual glance into hypermasculine adventure cultures reveals systemic inequalities associated with gender, race, dis/ablement and age (Beames, Mackie, & Atencio, 2019; Frohlick, 2005; Ortner, 1999). Moreover, despite the centrality of affective experience to tourism participation (Martini & Buda, 2020), little attention has been

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paid to how affective experiences of adventure tourism shape participation. This is particularly true of adventure guides and other crucial role models who must negotiate the challenges posed by hypermasculinity in adventure tourism.

In response, we examine the gendered nature of mountaineering to explore how affective and sensory experiences of women mountaineers are disciplined in adventure tourism settings. To understand how gender inequality is experienced in adventure spaces we draw upon Ahmed's (2010, 2004) theory of affective economies, and Hochschild's (2012) concept of emotional labour. We question, firstly, how hypermasculinity in adventure impacts sensory and emotional life and, secondly, how the virtual absence of femininity in the codification of a burgeoning mountain adventure destinations is experienced in ways that compound such inequalities.

Through semi-structured interviews and mobile video ethnography, the experiences of professional women mountaineers in the United Kingdom are explored, focusing upon the practices of gradism and solo mountaineering. Our deep reflexive approach and thematic analysis enables an appreciation of the emotional labour experienced when dealing with risk, and illuminates how emotions limit access to the socio-material spaces of mountains in gendered ways. The implications for inclusion in the study, practice and management of tourism studies are highlighted through the consideration of the unequal impacts such affective-sensory power relations have on adventuring bodies. Indeed, elucidating the gendered affective impact of the prevailing emotional sensory politics of mountaineering culture challenges us to deepen our understanding of what constitutes equality in adventure tourism.

## Literature review

### *Affect, feminism and gender*

Tourism and adventure are inescapably part of a hegemonic global society that works to justify the subordination of those outside dominant norms (Connell, 2005). Accordingly, we treat gender as a broad spectrum where identity is not tied to nature/culture, mind/body, and male/female binaries, whilst recognising the importance of embodiment (Eger, Munar, & Hsu, 2021). Indeed, historically assigned gender identity continues to have significant consequences, in the worst case by essentialising bodies as having fixed traits (Eger et al., 2021). For example, bodies can be 'inscribed' with gendered meanings concerning prevailing masculinities in adventure that privilege heroic characteristics such as aggression, competition, and unwillingness to admit weakness or dependency (after Connell, 2005).

For Butler (2011, p. xi – xii) "[t]he category of 'sex' is 'normative', a 'regulatory ideal' and 'practice' that 'produces the bodies it governs, ..., whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls'. Yet such material performances of reiteration, though working to reinforce the regulatory ideal, are not in themselves absolute, allowing disruptions to occur. As we later explore, mountaineering 'bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialisation is impelled' (after Butler, 2011, p. xii). This creates instabilities and openings that allow the hegemonic production of difference to be exceeded, escaped, and questioned. When a woman participates in mountaineering, she transcends the regulatory norms; whether she complies with the mountaineering rulebook or not, she challenges the hegemonic imperative. At the same time, the performance of a material female body, even when reiterating norms, cannot replicate the regulatory ideal of mountaineering. Difference is the space that women create.

Elisabeth Grosz (2005) conceptualises difference through the political interrogations of the body, desire, emotion, subjectivity, and identity. Explaining that the production of identity constructed through difference "is the gift of infection or contamination, the insight that every 'thing', concept, being, is always already infected by its other, its outside, its adversary, its boundary or limit" (Grosz, 2005, p.89). Grosz's conceptualisation of "force" opens new ways to constitute sexual difference "that is not pre-given, hierarchical, or oppositional" (Colls, 2011, p. 441), whereby, subjects are relational, situated and in constant flux. Situated bodies act as "receivers and transmitters" (Thrift, 2008, p. 236), continually affected by the flow of messages that are pre-personal or pre-subconscious. Viewed through this lens, gender in adventure spaces acts as a force that circulates, politicises, and disciplines bodies, including through affective relations.

However, the challenge in researching the pre-personal or affect is how to address the potentially dehumanising effect(s) of separating the sub/conscious body from external unknown influences. Scholars at the forefront of the affective turn, like Massumi (2002), rigidly differentiated 'affect' from 'emotion' that led to academic critique. Pile (2010, pp.10–11) for instance, attributes emotions and affect with a shared, fluid ontology, describing emotions as moving, and affects as circulating, arguing that "emotions are experienced and expressed within the body, affects define what the body can do". Furthermore, feminist treatments of affect bring class, sexuality, ethnicity and dis/ablement into focus by linking the pre-subconscious with emotions, senses, and feelings to elucidate how gender, power and difference are embodied (Ahmed, 2010; Colls, 2011; Wetherell, 2015). For Ahmed (2010, p.29) emotions are synonymous with affect, showing how emotion becomes objectified and circulates as "social goods" that stick to bodies, as with tropes such as the heroic mountaineer. Applying a feminist lens of affect thus offers rich potential for exploring gendered bodily experiences in adventure tourism. Indeed, attending to feelings, emotions and senses offers a way to understand how institutional and regulatory practices include or exclude bodies in relation to the sensory knowledge and systems of action of adventure spaces.

### *Affect in tourism*

The growing impetus to bring affect, and especially its tacit dimensions and impacts, more centrally into tourism research (Tucker & Shelton, 2018), resonates with the wider affective turn in the social sciences, and highlights the benefits of understanding the role emotions play in how particular bodies, sensations, meanings, practices, and spaces change each other. Studies have

examined, for example, how affective qualities shape the attractiveness of destinations (d’Hauteserre, 2015) and how affect can be managed and mobilised to cultivate a particular tourist experience (Freidus & Caro, 2021). Affect has been highlighted as foundational to tourism where the quest for sensory and emotional experiences is central (Buda, 2015; Tucker & Shelton, 2018). Yet, apart from Hall (2018) research on mountaineering, attention to affective politics in adventure tourism is lacking. In contrast, there is a growing body of work that considers approaches to affect in sports sociology (Fullagar & Pavlidis, 2018; Waitt & Clifton, 2013) and affect and feminism in physical cultural studies (Thorpe, Brice, & Clark, 2021). Freidus and Caro (2021, p.3) call for more attention to be paid to “how affect is managed and mobilised” in tourism, and specifically how power-laden affective relations are cultivated through particular strategies.

Such work calls for a more nuanced understanding of how tourism places and practices are experienced, highlighting two key insights from which we can build. First, tourist experiences are relational, embodied, and co-generated with/in particular socio-material spaces. Accordingly, we illuminate how encounters are not given, but mutually constituted by the situated experience of *all* the agents involved (Bondi & Davidson, 2003), such as tourist guides (Houge Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020). As d’Hauteserre (2015, p. 78) states, “local residents, tourism entrepreneurs and service workers, together with tourists are responsible for affect vibes generated in tourism spaces”. Second, this scholarship makes the work of affect visible as one of the implicit, yet consequential and underappreciated ways that “tell us much about how broader structures of power, poverty and injustice are (re)produced” (Everingham & Motta, 2020, p. 3). Affect impresses upon our emotions altering “how the world is” experienced and “our sense of who we are” (Davidson & Milligan, 2004, p. 524), influencing how individuals gain access and legitimacy (or not) within formal and informal communities.

Ahmed (2010, p.45) theorises how “objects of emotion circulate ... across social as well as psychic fields’ as an affective economy ‘between figures’, like political speeches that become objectified and materialise through ‘collective bodies’” like The Nation State. Using the example of those seeking asylum in Britain in the 1990s, she identifies how *the nation/collective body* is made anxious by political speeches that suggest (The Nation) is being overwhelmed by asylum-seekers. This intensifies questions of legitimacy that materialise as a feeling that “incoming bodies maybe bogus” and threaten The Nation’s borders producing hatred and alienation. In parallel, we show how emotions connect bodies with social space that form intense attachments or “affective economies”, such as, how heroism has become synonymous with mountain spaces (after Ahmed, 2010, p. 44). The mountaineering hero, imbued with imperialist masculine histories and emotions, circulates, and sticks to mountaineering bodies that materialises through being a *good mountaineer*. Mountaineering hero(ism) becomes the object of emotion that accumulates and is impressed, expressed, and capitalised via masculine senses and emotions, such as risk-taking, bravery, aggression, and powerful technical bodily movements. The affective economy of heroism in mountaineering thus privileges masculine ways to be, whereby femininity is oppressed through conscious and unconscious emotional labour working to generate alignment with the “collective body” of mountaineering (after Ahmed, 2010, p. 46).

Engaging with Ahmed’s (2004) seminal work invites us to consider for tourist spaces how “emotions do things” and “align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments” (p. 119). This enables attention to be better focussed on how affective geographies of tourism matter for visitors and supporting personnel (Buda, d’Hauteserre, & Johnston, 2014), and chimes with calls to address issues of inequality in tourism studies (Eger et al., 2021).

### *Gender in tourism and adventure mountain tourism*

One dimension of diversity flagged as crucial to tourism is gender (Aitchison, 2005; Alarcón & Cole, 2019; Chambers, 2022). Despite a burgeoning scholarship, gender studies in tourism remain marginalised and misconceived as a field focused on the challenges faced by women (see Eger et al., 2021). Eger et al. (2021, p. 2) attributes this to “patriarchal bias and ignorance” and calls us to consider how gender matters, and to question the “relationship between gendered cultures,” to realise greater sustainability in tourism. Despite scholars attending to the centrality of masculinities in tourist practice and experience (Thurnell-Read & Casey, 2014), challenging toxic masculinities that impact all genders (Porter, Schänzel, & Cheer, 2021) and how gender is embodied (Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic, & Harris, 2007), there is still much work to do.

Exclusionary masculine cultures are acute in adventure tourism, critiqued for an “underlying masculinist imperative” (Cater, 2013, p. 9) that perpetuates hypermasculine cultural practices (Frohlick, 2005; Stinson & Grimwood, 2022). Furthermore, an interdisciplinary body of research pays attention to issues of inclusion and gender in adventure spaces (Beames et al., 2019; Little & Wilson, 2005; Warren, 2016; Wheaton, 2000), and more specifically concerning (hyper)masculinities in climbing/mountaineering (Bott, 2013; Dilley & Scraton, 2010; Frohlick, 2000; Hunt, 2019; Robinson, 2008), postcolonialism and diversity (Purtschert, 2020; Wigglesworth, 2021), indigeneity and risk in mountaineering (Miller & Mair, 2019; Ortner, 1999) and women’s mountain adventure experiences (Avner, Boocock, Hall, & Allin, 2021; Evans & Anderson, 2018; Houge Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020; Pomfret & Doran, 2015). Scholarship dedicated explicitly to exploring gender in adventure tourism has yet to receive attention. Furthermore, a feminist exploration of gender through affective experience in adventure tourism activities, places and professions, and the implications for inclusivity, is absent.

Despite significant scholarship concerning how tourist encounters shape the affective experience of tourists (Martini & Buda, 2020), there is a dearth exploring the affective experiences of adventure tourists, including mountain guides. This is curious, especially in adventure tourism, where rapport is critical to safety, risk management and client experience (Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2017). Rak (2007, p. 115) attributes this void to “an emphasis on masculinity in the gender politics of high-altitude mountaineering”, [which] “has meant that feminist studies of women climbers and women-centred expeditions are still rare” (see also Dilley & Scraton, 2010). Indeed, Rak (2021, p. 20), argues “much less has been written about gender as social construct and a discourse in mountaineering when the focus is not masculinity alone”, to which this paper aims to respond. Therefore, our

contribution to the discussion will underline how *experience*, not just the mere *presence*, of diverse voices in tourism, are critical to inclusion in the adventure sector. Through exploring how hypermasculine affective economies impact on cultural practices in mountaineering, we explicate processes of governmentality that illuminate how high achieving mountain guides become marginalised.

### Grading: governmentality in mountaineering

Women have made a significant, yet hidden contribution to mountaineering, due in no small part to the “complicated relationship of nationalism, colonialism, and masculinity at play” (Hunt, 2019, p. 2). Prevailing processes of governmentality, rendering subjects governable through the disciplining of bodies and risk in relation to particular spaces, (Foucault, 1991) have been highly gendered. Ortner (1999) notes how mountaineering retains a powerful legacy of male-dominated clubs and governing institutions founded on masculine norms (e.g., regarding risk-taking). These clubs assumed responsibility for codifying and grading mountains that govern spatial practices in mountaineering in two ways. Firstly, clubs established traditions based on making first ascents of mountains, of which very few are by women. First ascents are graded by their difficulty and recorded in official guidebooks published by clubs (for a full description of UK climbing grade systems see United Kingdom Climbing (UKC), n.d.). Secondly, mountains are codified and valorised through masculine emotions and expressions of bravery, strength, aggression, leadership, confidence, risk-taking technical ability, self-sufficiency, and heroism (Carnicelli-Filho, 2013; Roche, 2015; Sharpe, 2005). Displays of heroism became synonymous with mountaineering and socially transmitted through rules that have evolved over generations to define the *good mountaineer*; including style of ascent, types of bodily movement, route naming and the sharing of stories and knowledge (Rak, 2021). Accordingly, atmospheres of masculinity permeate the work of governing mountaineering, erasing emotions associated with femininity, such as empathy, care, and fear (Frohlick, 2005; Sharpe, 2005).

Grades are symbolic of risk; the higher the grade the greater the risk. When taking risks Ortner (1999) observes that women mountaineers perform a kind of gender radicalism attributed to women operating outside of normal gender roles. The radical is not, however, a role model of resistance but perceived as an act of deviance or what Moraldo (2013, p.3) describes as “double deviancy”, which is transgressive of femininity and familial gender norms, such as the expectation that women should exercise greater risk-aversion than men (Dilley & Scraton, 2010). As such, women climbers have historically internalised and reproduced patriarchal and colonial values in mountaineering (see Taylor, 2006; Wigglesworth, 2021) which leaves untroubled how mountain places and spaces are performed and produced as destinations.

In 2022 women remain underrepresented in professional mountaineering, in the United Kingdom only 6 % of British Mountain Guides identify as women and (BMG, n.d.) female representation has not significantly improved since 2017 (see Table 1). Furthermore, inequalities in representation through published media are also acute, where 94 % of mountain autobiographies are written by men (Moraldo, 2013); and in a systematic survey of 32 UK mountain climbing guidebooks, only one received editorial contributions from a woman (Hall, 2018). Such figures reinforce that governing power structures have changed little since the inception of mountaineering as a leisure pursuit and that women mountaineers' presence continues to be marginalised “by the overwhelming male-ness of popularised mountaineering” (Hunt, 2019, p. 6). The affective economy of mountaineering heroism works to narrow the scope of who can be a mountaineer creating an invisible barrier to diversity (Rak, 2021). Such statistics provide fresh impetus for illuminating how inequality in adventure tourism is perpetuated through the emotional labour experienced by mountain guides.

### Affective economies: emotional labour in adventure and guiding

Emotional labour is central to sociological studies concerning organisations and institutions, including in tourism. First defined by Hochschild (1983, p.7), emotional labour identified how working people mask their true feelings and emotions to meet others' expectations by exercising feeling rules. Developing this, Grandey (2003) conceptualised three factors foundational to feeling rules that include 1) *situational* (display rules, duration and frequency of encounters, intensity, and variety of emotions); 2) *organizational* (autonomy, training, organizational support); and 3) *individual* (personality, gender, age, experience, emotional intelligence). Factors like these have increasingly been used to explore tour guide experiences (e.g., Busoi, Ali, & Gardiner, 2022) and a small but growing body of literature has studied emotional labour in adventure tour guiding (Carnicelli-Filho, 2013; Houge MacKenzie & Kerr, 2017; Houge MacKenzie & Raymond, 2020; Mathisen, 2019; Sharpe, 2005).

Importantly, Torland (2011, p.370) points to the intense emotional labour that adventure guides feel, produced by an “incongruence between their displayed and felt emotions” when trying to satisfy employers, clients, and sponsors. Feeling rules are both verbal and non-verbal and require full-body performances that demonstrate the ability to manage sensations of risk, and thus

**Table 1**

Mountain training, personal communication, March 23, 2017.

Mountaineering qualifications (2017)	Total number	Number of women	Percentage women
Mountain leader winter	2698	267	9.9 %
Mountain instructor award	1380	146	10.6 %
Mountain instructor certificate	625	37	5.9 %
British mountain guide	137	6 + 1 Associate	4.4 % / 5.1 %



signify “the cultural ideal” of the adventure hero (Sharpe, 2005, p. 34). Carnicelli-Filho (2013) identified how emotional hyperreality, constructed through media representations of the heroic adventurer, we suggest, creates an affective economy of expectation that adventure guides are compelled to replicate and objectify, which materialises through being a good mountaineer. The emotional labour arising from employer, client and public expectations of “heroic guide archetypes” has led to sensations of “ill-being” that negate a key motivation for being an adventure guide (Houge Mackenzie & Raymond, 2020, p. 1). Yet, beyond Torland (2011), scholarship has yet to benefit from feminist treatments of gender in adventure guiding and none have applied affective theory or explored the emotional labour that masculine heroic affective economies produce.

To appreciate how emotional labour, as a product of hypermasculine affective economies, politicises and ultimately disciplines adventurous bodies, we turn to emplaced reflexive, sensory and emotional ethnography.

## Methodology

### *Ethnography and affect: methodology & methods*

Ethnographic research enabled an inductive exploration of the sensory and emotional lives (Pink, 2015) of eight professional women mountain guides. Our ethnographic methodological research design combined novel fieldwork methods and approaches to writing (Campbell & Lassiter, 2014). Applying a feminist affective lens through an ethnographic approach enabled us to attend closely to the situated experiences of women mountaineers through their emotional and sensory worlds that extend beyond the boundaries of language. This facilitated bodily experiences relating to hypermasculine mountaineering cultures (e.g., risk) to be foregrounded. Following Pink (2015), our sensory ethnographic research was methodologically emplaced recognising the interrelatedness of mind-body-environment. We interpreted emplacement to include the political affective forces that are produced of, with, and beyond the body to study the impact of hypermasculinity in adventure tourism. This involved becoming mountaineering-tourists engaged in “deep reflexivity” to explore intersubjective sensory, emotional, and unconscious meaning, and integrating this with our method-level decision-making (Crossley, 2019, p. 209).

Our methods involved co-creating seven individual mountaineering days undertaking classic routes in winter, in the United Kingdom (the eighth mountain guide was not hill fit). Sharing a similar cultural background to the guides, a topic guide (list of themes/possible questions) was developed based on the researcher's mountaineering knowledge and experience. Both guide and researcher wore body-mounted Go-Pro Hero 3 cameras (90–240 min of film footage were collected each day). Fieldwork involved a full day of mountaineering with each participant (7 h), followed by an interview (1 h) and post-hoc field notes. Co-creation between guide and researcher involved collaboration before, during and after the mountaineering day involving dynamic decision-making processes to analyse risk regarding route choice and navigation, captured through writing-up post-hoc field notes. During the day, in-situ reflection identified key moments, topics and questions concerning mountaineering practices, experiences, motivations, emotions, sensations, social relationships, skills and values. These moments and topics led to deeper level questioning and observation of verbal, non-verbal, physical, sensory, and emotional modes of expression (Brown & Banks, 2015; Knudsen & Stage, 2017). Immediately after the mountaineering day, audio recordings from the Go-Pro films and semi-structured interviews were replayed and reflected upon, informing thematic topics in subsequent research days.

Following, Crossley (2019), we engaged in deep reflexive practice where fieldwork and data analysis were iteratively integrated throughout. We also, drew from, D’Cruz, Gillingham, and Melendez (2007) who make a distinction between the kind of reflexivity that occurs within the field that is individual and situated, in contrast to deep reflection that occurs pre and post fieldwork; that prepares and guides a body in experiential action. As such, deep or “double reflexivity enables the researcher to demonstrate commitment in fieldwork and write-up” through returning to the field and engaging in a “research imaginary” through video data (Blackman & Commane, 2012, 229–231). For example, through reflexively analysing the film footage recorded simultaneously, of guide and researcher, we identified how the researcher's body was graded through gendered heroic cultural practices of movement, which became an active line of enquiry in subsequent fieldwork mountaineering days (discussed later).

The process of deep reflexivity enabled investigation of the emotional labour produced by hypermasculine affective economies. For example, one in-the-field method was to systematically record the researcher's (sometimes uncomfortable) emotions through fieldnotes at the end of each day, such as engaging in heroic verbal and nonverbal actions (Crossley, 2019). This enabled identification of how tensions associated with accessing the ‘right kind of data’ led the researcher to unconsciously switch roles between researcher and mountaineer to prove competence to undertake hard mountaineering routes. Although we appreciated that assuming the role of mountaineer had opened access to verbal and non-verbal taken-for-granted sentient and emotional biographies; in contrast, it closed other positionalities such as the role of researcher or client and, thus, access to this data (after Pink, 2015). Crucially, the methods enabled longitudinal space to become aware of how, by assuming the role of a good mountaineer, hypermasculine sensory and emotional norms were replicated. In particular, the researcher was able to deeply reflect with the guides any related affective forces (Hemmings, 2012) through the emotional labour experienced.

### *Participants*

Professional women mountaineers were contacted through the publicly accessible UK Mountain Training database. Using the National Mountain Leader Winter (MLW) qualification as a benchmark for determining an appropriate level of skill and experience, participants were identified who were actively guiding clients. At the time of the study, there were only 37 registered women who fit this category, representing a tightly knit and elite group. The sample size was small and targeted to enable in-

**Table 2**  
Guides (\*professional qualifications, #interview only was not hill fit).

Guides	Mountain leader Winter*	Mountain instructor award*	Mountain instructor certificate*	Age	Mountain day (6-7 h)	Interview (60mins+)
Selkie	Y	Y	Y	45-55	Y	Y
Freddie	Y	N	N	45-55	Y	Y
Annie	Y	Y	Y	45-55	Y	Y
Lorrie	Y	Y	Y	25-35	Y	Y
Caitlin	Y	N	N	25-35	Y	Y
Julia	Y	N	N	45-55	Y	Y
Jo	Y	Y	N	25-35	Y	Y
Maddie#	Y	N	N	65-75	N	Y

depth and prolonged interaction to facilitate the study of affective, emotional, and sensory phenomena. Participants were from white Western middle-class backgrounds from the UK (see Table 2), which is a limitation of the study. Recruitment was by invitation and data were pseudo anonymised to protect the participants' identities (all guides identified as women).

Data analysis

The transcripts, field notes and video data were managed in NVivo and subject to thematic analysis to identify emerging connections and patterns (Braun & Clark, 2006). 29 codes and sub-codes were identified and then grouped under themes, such as sensory and emotional experiences, feelings, behaviours such as soloing, silence, well-being, grading and risk (see Fig. 1).

Reflexive analysis was crucial to identifying key findings, which involved triangulating data sources. For example, when writing field notes after the first mountaineering day the researcher experienced feelings of inadequacy. Reflecting upon these feelings, in-the-field, led to identifying how unconsciously we were mutually and silently observing each other's (guide and researcher) ability, competence, and fitness to assess if the chosen objective/risk was feasible, which produced pressure/emotional labour to move in gendered ways. Dual analysis of the timed film segments for both researcher and guide enabled the identification of a pattern where the researcher mimicked movements of the guide. Reflecting on this, we identified a theme concerning gendered practices of movement, which were predicated on technical ability, strong careful placements of feet and axe, not

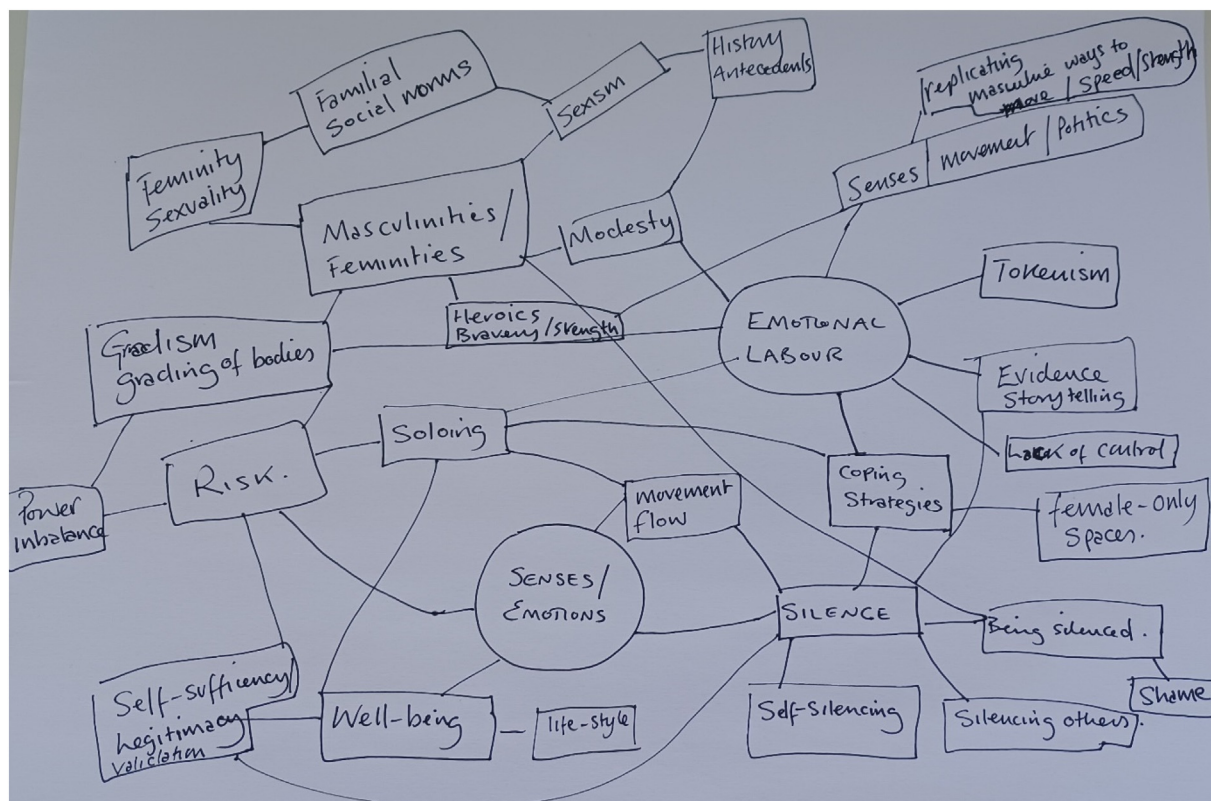


Fig. 1. Illustration of reflexive field note coding/theming (2016).

slipping, and speed. Such sensory politics codified our bodies, as mountaineering partners, signifying whether we were capable, safe, and heroic enough to undertake our set objective. Unconsciously, the researcher and participants engaged in “whole body tactility” where our mobile bodies created spatial stories that enabled different, often taken-for-granted, ways of being and thinking to be identified (Brown, 2017, p. 308). (Re)watching the simultaneously recorded videos enabled analysis of non-verbal sensory politics and corporeal affects (Rose, 2016) and identified how the researcher modelled *correct* styles of movement that govern how mountaineers should perform. Revisiting emplaced reflexive accounts was effective for pinpointing how hypermasculine affective economies impacted on fieldwork and the emotional labour this produced (Ahmed, 2010).

## Findings & discussion

Ethnography proved fruitful for identifying how hypermasculine affective economies shaped the emotional and sensory experiences of women mountaineers in adventure risk spaces. Practices of grading (the system of coding and grading the physical difficulty of climbing a mountaineering route) and soloing (climbing alone without protection) emerged as significant examples of the emotional labour demanded through hypermasculine affective economies. Grading profoundly impacts ways of sensing, feeling, and moving when aligning with the collective body of mountaineering, and shapes if and how guides feel able to communicate experiences to powerful others.

### *Emotional labour of becoming “a good mountaineer”*

All the guides expressed how, “having a name is actually quite a thing in the outdoor industry” (Jo, video) and worked hard both physically and socially to achieve and maintain their status as trusted and competent guides. Reputation or “having a name” holds symbolic power that intensifies and reproduces masculine social and sensory affective economies that govern mountaineering. For example, one research participant described how she and her colleague dealt with client sexism daily, citing how male clients express “that dip in the shoulders when they are given [Annabel] or myself on mountaineering courses” (Interview, Selkie). The emotional labour was objectified in an exhausting daily ritual of heroic self-masculinisation to affirm their place as mountaineers, by reeling off a list of classic hard climbs they had ascended. This highlights how the affective economy of being a good mountaineer impacts daily life. Reflexive analysis of the field research identified the ritual exchange of climbing achievements that occurred repeatedly in every field-research encounter, the researcher felt the anxiety and exhaustion of securing affirmation. Achieving status and legitimacy is an ongoing task for mountain guides to reap symbolic and material benefits, economically, socially, and geographically. As Annie described “I used to go at it like a bull in a China shop ...to prove I could do it as well as the men” (fieldnote). As such, the heroic affective economy circulates, reinforces, and normalises such sexism and tokenism.

Tokenistic recruitment in freelance guiding work is common as one guide expressed “I get work in Greenland because I am the token girl”. Rejecting such work was not an option because she did not want to be branded a troublemaker and knew that it provided a “step up the competition ladder” (Jo, video). Tokenistic recruitment practices produced emotional labour for Jo, “I want to be hired for the skills that I have not because of my gender” but remained silent because she feared being ostracised socially and economically, her shame and inner conflict were expressed through tone and body language. Women exercise silence concerning inequalities, fearing that “negative consequences follow those who challenge the system” (Fernando & Prasad, 2018, p. 10). Similarly, when securing lucrative mountaineering contracts, Arnot Reid (2017, n.d.), complained how being the “lone woman” led to being perceived as the diversity quota, which produced intense emotional labour where you have “to work twice as hard to establish that you deserve the spot”. This suggests that women mountaineers have internalised tokenism as a social practice that circulates as a heroic affective economy through the atmosphere of *good* mountaineering. Tokenism silences difference perpetuates inequality and intensifies the daily emotional labour experienced and remains untroubled in the adventure industry.

### *Governmentality: (down)grading bodies in mountaineering*

Mountaineering route naming and grading systems govern the spatial practices of mountaineering. Climbing hard grades secures reputations and places intense pressure on mountain guides to perform in spaces of extreme physical risk to secure social and material resources. Not climbing hard enough can have significant consequences leading to guides' reputations being downgraded. Negotiating such “grade-ism” or how hard a *grade* they were climbing (Ryan, 2005) was illustrated by Selkie (interview):

I will have a serious conversation with the guys at the [Mountaineering Centre] where I am down to lead on the [winter climbing] programme this year ... I do not think I am good enough ... as I make a very active choice that I am not going to climb grade V [adjectival – winter grade] with clients in winter it is just too dangerous

Is that really the mark? (Researcher)

It is certainly perceived to be. It was a big point ... of discussion this week about pushing up the grade for the MIC [Winter Mountain Instructor Certificate]

Most people do not climb that grade (Researcher)



Three of us ... were trying to get that across, but they did not see that because they are so far removed from that grade, [for example] you have an international guide saying grade III is really easy, it is like walking, it is not a climbing grade, and I was just sitting there thinking OMG you really have no idea. [When teaching] I fully appreciate people getting gripped on a Vdiff [adjectival grade – Very Difficult] slab and people getting the heebie jeebies ... on a grade I gully [adjectival winter grade]. But these guys just don't see it. So, if that is the expectation for training and assessment at MIC [to increase the grade] that is where you need to be [for leading professionally]

Guides like Selkie negotiate the exhausting daily effects of gradism or how hard a grade they climb, producing an atmosphere of toxic competition that is exclusionary (after Ryan, 2005). The consequence of refusing to guide on winter grade V routes meant the potential downgrading of Selkie's socio-economic opportunities (because of climate change grade V routes are rarely in safe condition in the United Kingdom). Fearing she would be perceived as “not be good enough to lead the programme” (interview) she experienced significant emotional labour. Gradism silenced and shamed Selkie to step back from a role she had worked diligently to secure. Visibly angry she expressed that it “comes down to ego and why you want to do the job” (fieldnote), resisting the heroic affective economy jeopardised her reputation as a good mountaineer. Selkie's experience illustrates how heroic affective economies downgrade and marginalise difference, expressed in her care and empathy for others. The impact of gradism, though varied, sticks to mountaineering bodies, silencing difference, and vulnerabilities (after Ahmed, 2004).

Early identification of gradist forces through in situ reflexive analysis prompted analysis of how grading impacted the research process and researcher. For example, Annie demonstrated every move, verbally and non-verbally at the hardest section of a ridge we were soloing. She asked if I wanted a rope or to take an easier line. “I don't,” I said, refusing the offer to avoid appearing weak or unskilled and feeling shame (video). The researcher felt anxiety and pushed to adhere to heroic gradist sensory politics by performing bravery; a taken-for-granted moment the researcher had enacted many times led to feeling de(graded). This prompted deeper investigation into how securing reputation produces gradist affective economies. For example, to escape gradist surveillance, Lorrie purposely soloed mountaineering routes during leisure time, despite associated extreme risks, because “There is no ego involved... no one was judging you” (video), illustrating how her climbing was marginalised, socially, temporally, and spatially, through fear of being judged. The antecedents of downgrading achievements can be traced to the 1880s, Elisabeth Le Blond's phenomenal first winter ascents in the Alps were attributed to her (male) guide (Gifford, 2013). We argue, downgrading is pervasive where Britain's high altitude record holder, Adele Pennington (2014) was told that after summiting Everest “it is a walk in the park” by a male guide. Downgrading the severity of a climb is underpinned by a heroic code of invincibility that a good mountaineer can take “whatever the mountain throws at us” (Lorrie, interview). When women's bodies enter a masculine environment, they claim space not designed for them (after Puwar, 2004), the circulation of heroic affective norms materialising as an economy that (down)grades women's physical abilities and achievements.

All the guides experienced downgrading. For example, it took Freddie many years to realise her ambition to lead climb routes and tell her (male) climbing partner “I want to do something for me, rather than stand and hold your ropes” (video). Women mountaineers are impacted by gradist forces that compel the adoption of silence and modesty as strategies to survive in this social battleground (Beedie, 2003), which constrains the political ability to act and perpetuates invisibility (Eger, 2021). We found that codes of modesty led to women downgrading their participation in leadership roles, Lorrie felt that “Often it takes somebody [male] to step down from that role for us to step up” (interview) this is not from a lack of confidence but driven by social constraints associated with stepping on masculine toes. Evident in the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club's (1907) rules warning that the “Spirit of rivalry should never enter into mountaineering expeditions”, “Always climb ... carefully; a slip, even when harmless, is something to be ashamed of” (Williams, 1973, p. 103). This governing code of modesty still pervades, curbing competitive ambition through an emotional double bind: the fear of social shaming associated with appearing either too ambitious or, conversely, too weak, and lacking competence.

The only woman on her course, Caitlin had recently passed her Winter Mountain Leader Award during which she had experienced gradism “I got told off by my assessor for not walking quickly enough; it was not directly sexist, but I was the shortest person on the course” (interview). The expectation was to walk at a speed of 4 km per hour, which Caitlin was more than capable of when using poles, but because of the intensity of the navigational exercise this was not possible and she fell behind “[The Assessor] came up to me and said, “Come on now you are taking the piss and it is not fair, if you can do 4 km an hour on your leg you can do 4 km an hour on other peoples' leg” (interview). Caitlin felt shame and did not challenge this sexism because she feared it would lead to her failing the qualification. This produced significant emotional labour and denial that this was sexist since she internalised the blame attributing a lack of fitness and speed as the cause. She was silenced, and her skills and ability were downgraded, demonstrating how inequality is embodied through the hypermasculine affective economy of being a good mountaineer.

Conversely, the code of self-sufficiency for all guides is a chief way to exhibit bodily power, bravery and psychological strength. Lorrie expressed how “you can go out for a solo day out in the hills, and it is that sense of self-sufficiency and full belief in yourself” (video), solo mountaineering was one strategy to achieve self-belief and legitimacy. During fieldwork the researcher found that they too were trying to demonstrate self-sufficiency to signify competence as a climbing partner and be recognised as a “fellow climber, so ... I consciously demonstrated my skills and experience. I climbed easily, quietly and in a controlled way...so that Selkie did not think I was a novice” (Fieldnote, Dec 2016). The researcher did not want to be (down)graded as a novice and it was only through deep reflexive analysis when writing field notes and later analysing video footage - reliving the moment and feelings of anxiety - that such sensory politics were identified. Self-sufficiency signifies an affective economy of good mountaineering that materialises through demonstrations of technical ability and risk-taking like solo mountaineering (discussed later).

However, we found that self-sufficiency intensifies emotional labour by silencing bodies from expressing fear. Selkie described how in the twenty years she had been mountaineering only twice had she heard male peers speak about fear. [Frank] had told Selkie during most winter days he “gets scared, and I remember [Teddy] telling me he gets sick in his stomach most days through the winter” (interview). This break in the silence had been revelatory for Selkie because discussing fear is associated with a lack of confidence and competence. For Selkie it was a huge relief that her male colleagues felt the same way that she did, enabling her to momentarily shed the emotional armoury that had prevented an outlet for sharing, rationalising and learning from negative sensations of fear. Self-sufficiency circulates as an affective economy that disciplines and grades bodies by silencing expressions of fear.

Gradism, when contextualised through governmentality and the wider institution of mountains and mountaineering, we posit, contaminates the sensory fabric of mountaineering destinations. Sensory politics circulate as a heroic affective economy present in the grading of routes, their naming, style of ascent, and how they are performed and shared through storytelling and knowledge sharing. Annie had graded my performance: “you’ve done enough...rock climbing ... takes a bit of working out ohhh it’s a boot jammer, ooh got to put your boot in there” Annie storied the moves in situ. She insisted on taking a photo of me, instructing me to “put a hand there for the hero shot” (Video), illustrating how my moves were graded and mobilised visually. Codifying mountain spaces through a hypermasculine affective economy of how to sense, feel and be, is central to how grading practices govern mountaineering geographically and culturally. Masculine histories, memories and emotions objectified through being a good mountaineer assume a bodily life that impresses upon mountaineers. This works to constitute an affective economy where masculine emotions and sensory perceptions (e.g., regarding risk-taking) act as a type of social currency.

#### *Affective economies: sensory politics and soloing in leisure and work*

Soloing is steeped in a history of heroism as the riskiest form of mountaineering. Surprisingly, soloing was a practice that all the guides turned to as a strategy to manage the intense scrutiny they experienced and the emotional labour this produced. They did so, both in work and leisure spaces, enabling them to achieve sensations of legitimacy, but at an emotional cost:

I have done a lot of pushing quite quickly, particularly last year. In the summer I worked in North Wales ... and was [also] around local people who were climbing really hard and know the area really well. I [was] trying to onsight the work to make sure I was doing a good job for [a Mountaineering Centre]. [As well as] climb in my spare time for myself. I was not really appreciating that this was putting me under [a lot] more pressure than I thought (Lorrie, interview).

Lorrie had worked hard to build a reputation with her new employer and colleagues and the chief way of working was to “onsight” the climbs when leading clients. In traditional climbing or mountaineering, an informal code requires the leader to climb a route without having any prior knowledge of it physically, apart from the route description contained within a guidebook. This is classed as onsighting. To receive assistance whilst climbing is perceived to be weak and can lead to social shaming (Beedie, 2003). Onsighting a route ramps up the pressure that guides feel because all the unknowns of the climb must be worked through in situ. This, combined with leading unknown clients who may not be competent climbers, means the guide must be sure they can not only climb the grade but can solo the route.

This put the guides were under pressure to lead at their limit to satisfy the demands of clients and employers. We argue that onsighting is an example of a hypermasculine affective economy signifying valued heroic traits, attributable to the gradist social control mechanisms that form the moral boundaries (Eger, 2021) of being a good mountaineer. The fear of social shaming prevented Lorrie from asking her employers for help, forcing her to accept physical risk, which was preferable to the social risk of appearing weak or incompetent and the possible socio-economic consequences for her professional status. The emotional labour produced by onsighting was significant, with Lorrie expressing how the fear of “failing and how I was perceived in front of peers, all that stuff is exhausting” (video). The precarity of working in such a gendered environment produces vulnerabilities rendering women mountaineers powerless to challenge inequality.

The pressure to perform also impacts personal/leisure time, where mountain guides feel compelled to climb at even harder grades to maintain a sense of bodily power, confidence and control, in order to meet the expectations placed on them. For example, picking an easier grade to climb was difficult because Lorrie’s climbing partners/peers were always pushing boundaries to maintain their status. Consequently, “It stopped me enjoying going climbing that winter... [during my] personal time I just did not really want to be there it was just too pressured” (interview). The impact of engaging in spaces of extreme risk during both work and leisure time eventually forced Lorrie to cease most of her mountaineering activity and rest that winter. The experiences of the guides suggest they have little choice but to solo to prove their worth as good mountaineers. Thus, soloing has many functions; not only proving legitimacy through publicly shared and valorised achievements but also, paradoxically, as a private, protective process to avoid toxic forms of surveillance and perceptions of encroaching on masculine spaces.

Thus, soloing is founded on a mountaineering ideology that serves to reify normative masculinities where risk is agentive for men (Eger, 2021). As Eger (2021, p.8) attests, “this contrasts with women’s experiences, who learn to consider their social interactions and movements through an internalisation of risk, to keep safe” and be modest for fear of reprisal. Julia explained how during a solo mountaineering expedition “I was flying up the rock...However, I felt I needed to stop, and I [told] myself to be responsible, to be careful...I was feeling like Superwoman, and it was not particularly clever. I had to check myself” (video). We posit, that the hidden practice of women mountaineers engaging in soloing has a long heritage, notable examples include Alison Hargreaves, Catherine Destivelle and Steph Davies. Following her solo ascent of the Grandes Jorasses, Destivelle noted that she

soloed so that “nobody can now say that it was my climbing partner, male of course, who did all the work” (Destivelle, 2015, p. 186), demonstrating the extremes women go to prove legitimacy.

Similarly, the guides rationalised the risks associated with soloing in preference to facing social scrutiny and rejection within the collective body of mountaineering. Paradoxically, gradism compelled them to seek extreme risk spaces through which they could perform and share stories of self-sufficiency, power, and bravery, in order to protect their legitimacy as mountaineers. We argue, this different way of mountaineering enables fluidity between masculinities and femininities that pushes and splits gender boundaries to access sensations of security and achievement. This produces intense emotional labour that circulates in a conflictual gradist affective economy of performing risk aversion and modesty, itself in tension with maintaining the heroic reputation of good mountaineer required to valorise their achievements.

### Conclusion: creating and denying senses of inclusion

This article advances a conceptualisation of hypermasculinity as an affective economy that circulates to produce significant emotional labour for those participating in adventure spaces of risk. It shows how mountaineering guides are caught up in an affective economy of adventure that privileges heroic masculine ways to *be*, marginalising femininity through the conscious and unconscious emotional labour of working to align with the ‘collective body’ of mountaineering.

Understanding how gender in mountaineering grades adventurous bodies, and is embodied, institutionalised, and performed, helps us appreciate how difference is silenced and inequalities are reproduced. Our research underscores how mountaineering maintains an extreme version of masculinity that works against diversity by excluding “any other kind of identity for its participants” (Rak, 2021, p. 5–6). Moreover, it shows how hypermasculine affective forces lead guides to develop extreme strategies, such as solo mountaineering, to secure *good* mountaineering reputations and cope with being socially differentiated. The emotional labour experienced when working in high risk-environments creates a paradox where risk is also constituted as a safe space, in contrast to spaces where masculine-heroic markers of legitimacy must continuously be performed and shared through risk stories. In doing so, women mountaineers push, split and force new frontiers of experience that unsettle the heroic norm; they oscillate between hero and intruder, creating fluidity between masculinities and femininities. This illustrates how appreciating the complexities of gender in adventure demands us to understand the constitution of its practices through interconnected sensory, emotional, conscious, and sub-conscious levels of understanding.

Through the work of Grosz, Butler, and Ahmed, we connected feminist approaches to relationality and affect to examine how adventurous subjects become emplaced, interrelated (after Pink, 2015) and productive of adventure and outdoor risk spaces. Our novel approach for capturing data using mobile video ethnography in tandem with deep reflexivity, offers a rich mode of illuminating sensory and affective politics in situ. We identified how hypermasculine affective economies manifest through the psycho-social integration of social practices in verbal and non-verbal emotional registers, such as modesty and acceptance, as well as the reproduction of discriminatory practices regarding tokenism. Moreover, we demonstrated how gendered practices *experientially* limit access to social and material spaces of mountains, even by those considered included.

To answer Grosz’s (2005) call to go beyond masculinity and femininity and be more accepting of difference, we must create opportunities for fluidity within gender. We highlight how gender is constituted consequentially in mountaineering, reproducing inequalities through the grading practices so central to mountaineering governing processes. If we are to cultivate inclusive adventure tourism spaces and begin to decolonise academic tourism research, we should attend to the plurality of bodies and experiences that exist on the margins of tourism spaces. We must explicate the implicit costs of the emotional labour required to navigate the affective economies of associated communities and the precarity of any inclusion secured. Our paper contributes to adventure tourism scholarship by exploring the gendered sensory and emotional experiences of mountain guides, but there is much work to do. Hypermasculinity discriminates in multiple, complex, and cumulative ways, yet little is known how they intersect across multiple axes of social differentiation in adventure spaces. We call for deeper understandings of how affective relations not only create, but also regulate, adventurous and touristic experiences, to illuminate the subtle and taken-for-granted ways of creating and denying senses of inclusion, and its implications for the possibilities and experiences of participation.

### CRedit author statement

Jenny Hall: Conceptualisation, methodology, data collection and analysis, writing – original draft preparation, reviewing and editing.

Katrina Myrvang Brown: Analysis, writing, reviewing, and editing.

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