

Autophenomenography and Martial Arts: Future Directions for Practitioner-Research



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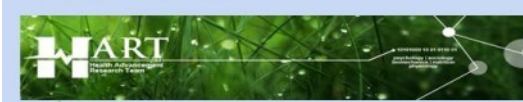
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Overview

Acknowledgements

David Brown

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Sociological phenomenology & 'lived heat' in sport & physical cultures

Research Team:

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- Former title: *"Studying the Senses in Martial Arts."*
- Adjusted to consider the building of theory through phenomenology of and beyond the senses.

Objective

- To introduce the potential of autophenomenography as a method for practitioner-research of cultures of combat (martial arts, combat sports, violence, etc.).
- As part of collaborations with colleagues in the Health Advancement Research Team (HART) and other practitioner-researchers.

Martial Arts and Practitioner Research

Some notable examples:

- Wojciech Cynarski
- Ben Judkins
- Paul Bowman
- Carlos Gutierrez
- Alex Channon
- Chris Matthews
- Greg Downey
- Loic Wacquant
- David Brown
- D.S. Farrer
- Doug Wile
- Phillip Zarrilli

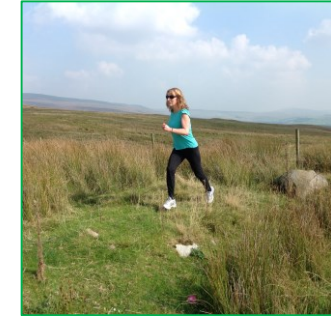
- In research on “cultures of combat” normally come from a background of experience in terms of practice or exposure.
- They might adopt a position of a practitioner-researcher as veteran practitioners, former and returning exponents or as apprentices (e.g. Wacquant, 2004).
- Many works by “fighting scholars” (Sanchez Garcia & Spencer, 2013) indicate this possibility for sampling, reflection and the beginnings of research.
- Working in teams is now more common, blending different positionalities and experiences (Delamont, Stephens & Campos, 2017; Jennings, Brown & Sparkes, 2010).

Automethodology in Ethnographies of Martial Arts

- Ethnography as a longstanding tradition in martial arts scholarship across the disciplines from the early 1980s. It is increasingly multimodal, cross-cultural and reflexive (Jennings, forthcoming 2018).
- A key theme for research has been the body and embodiment (Channon & Jennings, 2014).
- *Body & Soul* (Wacquant, 2004)
- *When the Body Becomes All Eyes* (Zarrilli, 1998)
- *The Wrestler's Body* (Alter, 1992)
- The senses (alone and in unison) are becoming increasingly important in sensuous ethnographic research from a first-person perspective (Sparkes, 2009; Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2011; Dutkiewicz & Spencer, 2017; Spencer, 2012; Vaittinen, 2017).
- **Automethodology:** The study of oneself for oneself by oneself.

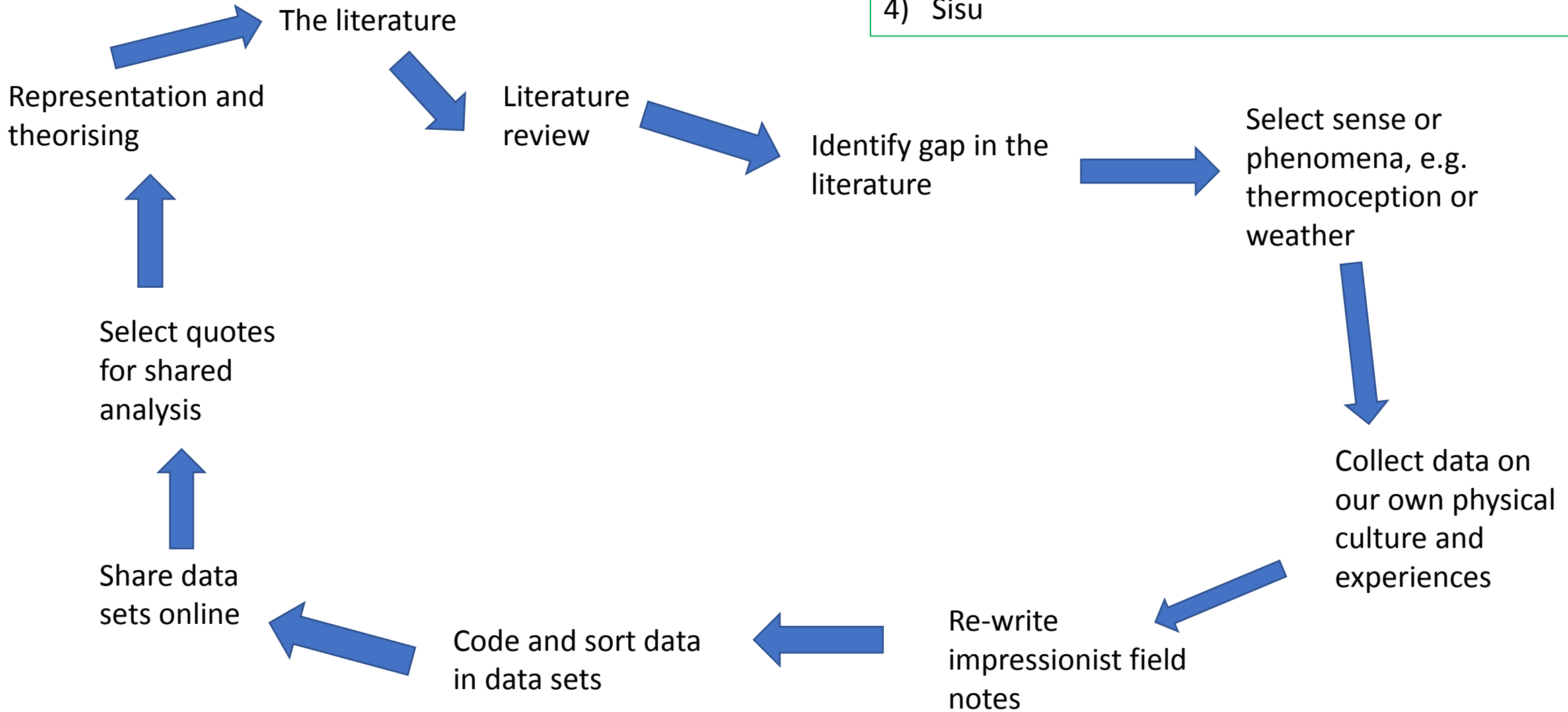
Autoethnography and Autophenomenography

- **Autoethnography:** The study (and writing) of oneself as a representative of a group of people with a common culture (see Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2015).
- *Auto:* The self
- *Phenomeno:* Phenomena (things as they appear to us)
- *Graphy:* The writing (or representation) of
- **Autophenomenography:** The writing of how phenomena appear to us in the first person (singular or combined) to 'us' as practitioner researchers? For example, Stenius and Dziwenka (2015).
- Seen in anthropological and sociological phenomenology that fits within interpretivist research projects.
- Using phenomenology as *theory* and *method* to build theory and begin with direct embodied experience in time, space and through the senses.
- 'Bracketing' out (as much as possible) prior assumptions, presuppositions surrounding a phenomenon, and being increasingly reflexive (Allen-Collinson, 2011, 2012)
- A phenomenological reduction to the 'essences' of the phenomena during analysis.



The 'Research Process'

- Sub-projects:**
- 1) Heat and thermoception
 - 2) Weather work
 - 3) Four seasons
 - 4) Sisu



Heat (Thermoception)

Drawing on the established collaboration in women's running and boxing (Allen-Collinson & Owton, 2015; Owton, 2015).

- Boxing, MMA, running and Wing Chun.

Allen Collinson, J., Vaittinen, A., Jennings, G. & Owton, H. (2016). Exploring lived heat, "temperature work" and embodiment: Novel auto/ethnographic insights from physical culture. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (online early).

Examining the additional sense of heat beyond the traditional five Greco-Roman senses (Classen, 1993).

Developing concepts of 'temperature work.'

I just 'knew' when to take off my light sweater. Having warmed up with some light qigong and stretching out my hand techniques, I decided to open a button in my polo shirt in the basic stance. From the stance itself to the form and then basic techniques, I concentrated on relaxation. However, having completed the left side of the slow-motion section, I switched hands, only to find the right side rather clammy. Sweat was spread all across my exposed palm. Yet the open hand techniques in the air soon cooled it down as the hands returned to normal.

The fingers now press into my fist as I feel the temperature of both my palm and my fingers respectively. Yet even my groin started to itch itself as if I hadn't dried myself properly after a shower.

Weather & Weather Work



Photo courtesy of Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson

Allen Collinson, J., Jennings, G., Vaittinen, A. & Owton, H. (2018). Weather-wise? Sporting embodiment, weather work and weather learning in running and triathlon. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (online early).

- Developing concepts of ‘weather work’ and ‘weather learning.’
- Running across the seasons in different parts of the UK:
 - Jogging (George)
 - Distance running (Jaqui)
 - Wild runs (Helen)
 - Triathlon and Ironman (Anu)
- Could transfer to martial arts cultures and training.

The Four Seasons



Sisu: A Finnish cultural concept

“Sisu is extraordinary determination, courage and resoluteness in the face of extreme adversity. An action mind set which enables individuals to reach beyond their present limitations / take action against the odds and transform barriers into frontiers. An integral element of Finnish culture and also a universal capacity we all share. “
Lahti, 2015

Q. How might this action mind set relate to sensory embodied experiences of adversity within physical cultures?

Q. How can the concept become a theoretical concept?

Q. Can it also be applied to auto-ethnographic/auto-phenomenographic methodology?

Q. Is it different to the ‘hard work’ of Kung Fu, which is seen as a relationship (see Partikova & Jennings, 2018)?



Photo courtesy of Epic Events

'Martial Sound'

Martial arts and 'hearing cultures' (Erlmann, 2004). Future work with ethnomusicologist Colin McGuire (see McGuire, 2015).

Method

Is there ever a true silence to provide a vacuum in which to explore 'martial sound'? I found a playlist under the search for 'music for martial arts training' on YouTube, and began to be inspired until along advertisement disturbs my concentration. Interestingly, it was in Spanish, and ran for several minutes, and I decided on a track that I knew and trusted: "Beethoven Moonlight Symphonata (2 hours version)", which I had used several times before, during late night training. There were no more interruptions, and I was able to focus on the sense of heat, although the familiar tone of a text message distracted me somewhat. Having returned to the proper focus of attention, I then heard the second tone of the reminder of this message. Is it urgent? Should I check it? The sound of the message made me think of my girlfriend out for drinks with her friends. Would they be finished so early? Or was my experience of time out of synch with hers? I stopped my training to check this for peace of mind.

Data

The open-hand techniques seem to have more of a whoosh-like, 'Kung Fu sound than the basic punch. The double chop to the side – now at 45 degrees according to changes in my association – was particularly 'striking' in this manner.

Writing these notes now, I hear myself hitting the paper with the pen, and also a car settling into a space next to the apartment. Doors slam slightly, but with a quiet flat on a Friday night, I write at ease. The crickety-crack of my wrists made me realise how little I had trained in recent weeks. My wrist felt sore even with the *tau sau* technique. Analysing this, I feel myself cleansed internally for having trained and move these joints.

MMA and practitioner research: Sensuous and embodied ways of knowing



- 12-month ethnographic study guided by phenomenological-interdisciplinary analytical frame which also generated a wealth of auto-ethnographic/phenomenographic data.
- Insights into gendered dimensions of MMA practice (pain and injury) through critical auto-ethnographic reflection and embodied practitioner research as a method (Vaaitinen, 2016)
- Previously Stenius and Dziwenka (2015) had also explored auto-ethnographic method in relation to violence and pain in MMA.
- Furthermore, the data yielded insight on the role of the senses and embodied experiences of the – practitioner/researcher, MMA practitioners and MMA coaches in pedagogic practices (Vaaitinen, 2017) and developing ways of knowing skill in MMA (Vaaitinen, 2014), pain and injury.

“Even though my heavier training partner is capable of putting more power through the choke, which as it tightens, makes me desperate for a gasp of air, after practicing the move with him, I also discover something. A lightbulb moment occurs as I realise that my thin, bony arm on their neck makes him extremely uncomfortable and as I perfect my technique, I gradually find that my lesser relative force application emerges as equally effective but for a different reason: as a physically smaller person I am able to exert control through developing a bodily capacity to execute technique and sense the correct positioning and timing. Exploring my experiences of training from the perspective of the practitioner-researcher, I inspect these visceral, bodily practices from a somewhat different angle, one that leads to embodied discoveries in their own right (Researcher’s reflective field notes, 2011)”

Summary...and future directions

- As the exploration of cultures of combat continues to develop around embodiment, learning and training by practitioner-researchers, autophenomenography could play a more prominent role in the methodological strategies of future investigations.
- Autophenomenography is one automethodology that can stand beside or within an auto/ethnography of martial arts to provide insightful and sensuous studies of martial arts by martial artists and potentially for martial artists.
- Building theory through embodied experience “from the body up” (Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2007), exploring the physical/material and ecological environment as a being-in-the world.
- Collaborations are possible within across art and also cultures for studying familiar and less familiar practices.

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Thanks for Listening. Grazie!

Any questions?

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