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Intercorporeal Enaction and Synchrony: The case of distance running together

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Introduction

Whilst there exists a substantial literature focused upon abstract theorizations of sport, at present there is relatively little ethnographic or autoethnographic research within sports studies that focuses on the mundane practices of actually “doing sport” and specifically on “doing sport together”. In sum, the phenomenological ground of how sport is accomplished remains largely uncharted territory for researchers, as recent reviews have indicated (Haldrup & Larsen 2006, Hockey & Allen-Collinson 2007, Sparkes 2009, Allen-Collinson 2009). This lacuna applies both to the phenomenology of the lived sporting body and particularly to embodied interaction between sports participants, the finely attuned intercorporeality necessary to accomplish sporting enaction (Di Paolo et al. 2010, Meyer & Wedelstaedt in this volume). There is some research that addresses these two elements, particularly in relation to martial arts of various kinds, for example, mixed martial arts (Spencer 2012, Vaittinen 2014), karate (Masciotra et al. 2001), capoeira (Downey 2005), and also *vis-à-vis* boxing (Allen-Collinson & Owton 2014a), basketball (Rail 1992), rock climbing (Jenkins 2013), and distance running (Allen-Collinson 2008, Hockey 2013) to name a few. It has to be said, however, that the literature synthesizing the phenomenological and the interactional at present remains relatively embryonic.

In order to address the existing lacuna, this chapter offers an in-depth, phenomenologically inspired analysis of how training together for distance running requires finely attuned interaction and intercorporeality of endurance athletes. We focus specifically upon the sensory and interactional work, which, for us, constitute essential components in the experience of doing running-together. In terms of our phenomenological inspiration, we draw upon Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1968) existential and "carnal" phenomenological work, given his focus upon the centrality of the body in *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) and our body as the perceptual standpoint from which we perceive the world, often in pre-reflective mode. Schütz's (1967) sociological phenomenology is also utilized, in order to examine the shared "stock of knowledge" that runners use to accomplish running and specifically, running-together. In the chapter, we therefore first present the theoretical perspective of sociological phenomenology, before describing the collaborative autoethnographic project from which our data are drawn. Collaborative or joint autoethnographies constitute a novel methodological approach within sports studies, as we describe below. Our autoethnographic data are subsequently used to portray, explore and analyze in detail our various intercorporeal practices and processes, which are fundamental to the enaction of our running-together, and more specifically our training-together for distance running.

Sociological phenomenology

Derived from the Greek root *phōs*, or light, *phainomenon* means that which is shown, or "placed in the light". A phenomenon is an appearance, an observable occurrence, something that appears in our conscious mind, and thus phenomenology is the philosophical study of how things appear to consciousness. As Martinková and Parry

(2011) note, within the philosophical tradition, phenomenology is interested in phenomena only insofar as their relation to consciousness goes, in identifying structures of consciousness. Straying away from its more “pure” philosophical roots in Husserl’s (1999) ground-breaking work, and often drawing upon existential phenomenology (particularly that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir), phenomenology has in more recent times been adopted by sociological and psychological researchers in sport and exercise as a form of empirical phenomenology (see for example, Kerry & Armour 2000, Hockey & Allen-Collinson 2007, Allen-Collinson 2009, Crust *et al.* 2014, for some examples). Phenomenology highlights the ways in which the world, body and consciousness are all fundamentally intertwined, braided, inter-relating and mutually influencing. In his later, unfinished work, Merleau-Ponty (1968) examines how we have existential unity with the *chair* (flesh) of the world; our mind and body are firmly embedded and emplaced in the world. His turn from using *being-in-the-world* toward *flesh-of-the-world* (the French, *chair*) signals the material and elemental connectedness of our existence with that of the world that we inhabit.

While existential phenomenology emphasizes the world-situatedness of mind and body, phenomenology more widely has at times been subject to trenchant criticism for inadequate theoretical attentiveness to the *social*-structural aspects of experience and embodiment (Allen-Collinson 2011a). Although philosophical phenomenology does emphasize the universal elements of human experience, the above critique is fully acknowledged and addressed by various forms of more “sociologized” or “cultural phenomenology” (Csordas 1994) such as feminist phenomenology (e.g., Young 1980; Allen-Collinson 2011b) that explicitly recognize and theorize the structurally influenced, historically specific and culturally situated nature of human experience. With regard to

more sociological forms of phenomenology, Husserl's descriptive phenomenology was initially applied within North American sociology by Alfred Schütz (1967), whose attention was particularly drawn to the Husserlian conception of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), our immediate world of everyday experience, intersubjectively and intercorporeally shared with others.

It is this shared experience, and particularly its intercorporeal elements, that we examine in this chapter, focusing upon the shared life-world of distance running. We draw upon Merleau-Ponty (1962) insights on intercorporeality and the ways in which we as humans engage with the world and with others. Husserlian phenomenology is often considered to be concerned with the singular experiences of one's own body (*le corps propre*) so that another's experience can never be fully "known" apart from via representation. Merleau-Ponty has, however, been accused of confusing self and other with his notion of "compresence" and of undermining Husserl's claim that an individual can never have a direct presentation of the interior life of another, but only ever have a representation thereof (see Murphy, 2010 for an excellent discussion). Without becoming too embroiled in philosophical discussions regarding the nature of *ego-alter* interactions, and being mindful of the need to avoid claiming "merger" with another person (Smith *et al.* 2009), nevertheless Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on intercorporeality as a key element of our being-in-the-world is certainly important. It is germane to our analysis here, particularly the notion that acting together in a coordinated fashion can be enhanced by a form of "intuitive" corporeal engagement with the world and with other (Meyer & Wedestaedt in this volume) and by shared experiential and corporeal ways of knowing. So, for example, in our running-together, not only do we see and hear that our co-runner is struggling to ascend a slope with her/his usual degree of alacrity, but we also know experientially the

feeling of such struggles, we know the corporeal feelings of being in that moment-of-struggling, of legs feeling heavy and weak, or breathing becoming ragged and raspy. We understand (although never completely or finally, see Smith *et al.* 2009), via shared corporeal knowledge, ways of knowing and experience, what the other is feeling, and we adjust our own actions in accordance with that understanding, in our case in order to sustain running-together over the terrain of our training routes. For, as Bäckström (2014) notes following Pink (2011), we need to recognize the interrelatedness not just of mind and body, but also of mind, body and place. Before portraying and analyzing the data relating to the achievement of corporeal synchrony in running-together, we first describe the collaborative autoethnographic project from which these data originate.

The collaborative autoethnographic running project

Whilst having its critics (e.g., Atkinson & Delamont 2006, Delamont 2009), from more “traditional” elements of social-science communities, autoethnography also has a growing body of proponents positing powerful justifications for its utilization where appropriate and insight-generating (e.g., Allen-Collinson & Hockey 2005, Ellis *et al.* 2011). Autoethnography brings to bear an ethnographic perspective on the researcher’s own personal, lived experience as a member of a (sub)cultural group, directly linking the micro level with the macro, cultural and structural levels. It examines the dialectics of subjectivity and culture, and in general entails the detailed analysis of the researcher(s) *qua* member(s) of a social group or category; in this case, the distance-running subculture. The autoethnographic genre is becoming more established within the sociology of sport and physical cultures (e.g., Kaskisaari 1994, Tsang 2000; Hockey & Allen-Collinson 2006, Allen-Collinson & Owton 2014a) and ranges over the full continuum from “analytic” to more “evocative” forms (see Anderson 2006). With regard to collaborative

autoethnography or joint autoethnography, this particular methodological form has its own history (see Bochner & Ellis 1995). In more recent times, joint autoethnography has become more widely practiced and is signaled as a key future direction for the autoethnographic genre. It is a wide-ranging and protean form, spanning from the involvement of just two researchers/authors/participants in co-constructing the narrative (Bochner & Ellis 1995), to, at the other end of the spectrum, the involvement of many others, even a whole community. Collaborative autoethnographers adopt various models, ranging from full co-involvement at all stages of the research process to collaboration only at a specific point or points. In the “parallel” or “concurrent” approach, data are gathered independently but concurrently, and researchers then join together to share and discuss their findings, subsequently feeding back these discussions into the collaborative autoethnographic narrative. This is analogous to our own approach.

The collaborative autoethnographic project on distance running was undertaken during a period of two years during which time we were both suffering, recovering and rehabilitating from long-term knee injuries that at times prevented us from running completely. Our individual distance running biographies extend over 29 and 47 years respectively, and we were committed, frequent running partners for almost 20 years. Although we (sadly!) fall within the non-élite category, our running, has always been commensurate with two of Bale’s (2004) forms: 1) welfare running, pursued for health and fitness aims; and also 2) performance running, pursued in order to improve and sustain performance. Whilst the term “performance” is often applied to describe élite runners, nevertheless, on many dimensions it can also be applied to those who are non-élite, but nevertheless are highly committed, *serious runners*. Our relatively extended careers in running helped address Garfinkel’s (2002, p. 175) phenomenologically-derived “unique

adequacy requirement”, for the researcher to: “be *vulgarly* competent to the local production and reflexively natural accountability of the phenomenon or order he (sic) is ‘studying’” (italics in original). In other words, we were adequate at “doing running”, and more pertinent to the case at hand “doing running together”. That competency, consisting of a combination of sensory and cognitive practices, was resident before our research took place, and constituted our running “stock of knowledge at hand” (Schütz, 1967). This we used to order our social running world on a moment-to-moment basis, to organize and structure athletic experience. Our collaborative autoethnographic research project can then be understood as a process that sought to uncover, analytically, that hitherto taken-for-granted, mundane stock of athletic knowledge, including the production of “running-together”. Here then was our challenge: we possessed the knowledge, the task before us was to reveal it analytically, so as to communicate a research understanding of it. We were helped in this analytic task by the collaboration and questioning between us, which is depicted below.

During the two-year autoethnographic research project, we each recorded systematically our daily (or almost daily) engagement (often painful and highly emotional) with the injuries and rehabilitation, via field notebooks, training logs, micro-tape recorders and photographs. Towards the end of the rehabilitation period, entries were focused more upon the actual running than upon the injury process, and most of the entries included below relate to the production of running therefore. We did briefly consider recording the running efforts via video, but rapidly decided against this, finding the additional equipment (of the time) too cumbersome and time-consuming to use; our energies were better preserved for engaging with the actual production of running. In addition to individual logs, we also maintained a joint analytic log, in which we generated analytical

themes and concepts, and recorded the discussions between us. As two qualitative sociologists, of different genders, but with strong running identities, we shared many similarities, but inevitably also diverged in our embodied experiences and thinking; the times when the “auto/co” ethnographic became more “auto” than “co”. In the collaborative log (Log 3), thematic or conceptual differences between us were identified and, if possible, reconciled. Where no analytical reconciliation proved achievable, we accepted and recorded the differences, discussing the reasons for such divergence and the impact, if any, upon the process of handling the injuries, thus adding to the data collection process. Throughout the research, we engaged in a sociological form of phenomenological *epochē* and bracketing (Allen-Collinson 2011b), and personal “embodied reflexivity” (Burns 2003), subjecting to question and analysis the impact of our bodies on the meanings, beliefs and knowledge we both used and generated; in general our bodily ways of knowing (Vaittinen 2014).

Having portrayed the collaborative autoethnographic project, we now proceed to consider the key findings cohering around the production of running-together in the particular places of our running routes. In the data extracts that follow, Log 1 relates to John’s entries, Log 2 to Jacquelyn’s and Log 3 to our joint analytic Log.

The findings

Employing our autoethnographic data, this section focuses upon various corporeal and sensory practices, which, when combined, we found to be fundamental to the achievement of running-together. First, we consider the complex ways in which we maintained running rhythm and timing with each other in an almost pre-reflective and intuitive corporeal

coordination between us as training partners. Second, drawing upon Schütz's (1967) notion of *typifications* and common-sense knowledge, we consider the ways in which we, as training partners and co-runners, constructed and drew upon typifications of each other. Third, we analyze the ways in which our senses were used in order to achieve running-together, via close auditory attunement to our training partner, and also "performative utterances" (Turner 1975). Fourth, continuing the sensory focus, we turn our attention to the ways in which we undertook the visual evaluation of our training partner's running comportment and demeanor in order to make subtle adjustments. We begin by examining the role of rhythm and timing in the co-production of running-together.

Rhythm and timing

Cooperative distance running-together demands a monitoring of one's training partner's form. In UK subcultural parlance the latter is usually termed "going". So runners will ask each other "how are you going?" or they will themselves occasionally declare, "I'm going well" or "I'm going badly". Sometimes, such declarations are made out loud during training sessions, but more habitually these are internal thoughts to self. In a similar fashion, runners evaluate how their training partners are going, as regular monitoring and evaluation are necessary for intercorporeal synchrony to be maintained. Otherwise, given differences in individual "natural" pace, runners can easily find themselves drifting apart during training, with the trailing runner falling behind, or "off the back" in subcultural parlance. Achieving running together thus necessitates a constant reciprocity of attention and an ongoing and mutual adjustment of rhythm and pace. Running-together, analogous to walking-together (Ryave & Schenkein 1975) and rowing-together (Lund *et al.* 2012), demands of co-runners considerable interactional work. It also requires moving together

and perceiving together, for as Ingold (2000, p. 166) notes, “locomotion not cognition must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity”.

The forward movement of running has two principal inter-related components: rhythm and timing. Goodridge (1999, p. 43) defines rhythm in human physical performance as a: “patterned energy-flow of action, marked in the body by varied stress and directional change; also marked by changes in the level of intensity speed and duration”. Rhythm then organizes or shapes the flow of action, while simultaneously being part of that action. The rhythms of distance running are predominantly cyclical, rooted in the combination of synchronized breathing patterns and lower limb cadence, although other parts of the body are also involved. Achieving rhythm involves for the individual a coordination of bodily parts as the demands of terrain are negotiated via precise bodily adjustments necessary for the chosen footfall and cadence. To do this effectively requires the development of a particular sense of timing, which Goodridge (1999, p. 44) defines as: “the act of determining or regulating the order of occurrence of an action or event, to achieve desired results”. Furthermore, there is a general rhythm to every distance running session, dependent upon the objectives of the particular session. For many runners, sessions are categorized into aerobic and anaerobic work or a combination, which requires particular rhythms that are intimately related to the times and distances athletes seek to achieve. Within the general overarching rhythm, there will also inevitably be changes of rhythm during specific sections of the run, as training sessions are rarely uniform in terms of physical and also psychological demands.

In runners’ mundane subcultural parlance, we talk of “hitting a rhythm” or “holding to a rhythm”. When the latter is achieved there is not just a cognitive recognition, but also a corporeal realization, via a constellation of sensorial indicators (Hockey 2013): the

responsiveness of musculature, fluidity of breathing, availability of energy, and postural alignment. When a rhythm is not achieved or found only with difficulty, then musculature is not responsive, breathing may be ragged, energy low and posture disjointed. Interestingly, in the research case at hand, the phrase we mundanely used to categorize a lack of rhythm was that we were “all over the place”. Again drawing on subcultural argot, most training sessions consist of “little good patches” and “little bad patches” (see Hockey 2013), within which individual form fluctuates according to distance, pace, terrain, temperature, wind, degree of fatigue, agility, and cardio-respiratory fitness levels, with all of these factors interacting. The complexity of this combination is greatly compounded when two or more runners are involved, and it is to this complexity that training partners have to devote their attention so as to achieve running-together. When partners are very well-known to each other in terms of running abilities and preferences, they can become almost pre-reflectively co-attuned, particularly if the training session is going relatively well, and the terrain itself is familiar or relatively easy. Such attunement generally only occurs when runners have long-standing, sedimented knowledge and understanding of each other as running-beings, however. It is to this kind of experiential knowledge and ways of knowing that we now turn.

Typifying the other

Training together for nearly twenty years has produced a particular understanding of each other as distance runners, constituting what Schütz (1967) terms the “stock of knowledge at hand”, which we used to accomplish running-together. Utilizing this stock of knowledge, we constructed *typifications* in Schützian terminology: common-sense constructs that were used to order the routine running life-world on a moment-to-moment

basis, to organize and structure our experience (cf. Benson & Hughes 1983, p. 53) of training together. The most directly phenomenal form of typifications were sensory-based perceptions of each other based on primarily ocular and auditory intelligence, which we depict in detail below. At a higher level of abstraction, however, were typifications that, whilst emanating from visual and auditory information, linked our corporeal strengths and weaknesses with the features of terrain, climate, light and dark. Habitual movement over various kinds of terrain produced particular categorizations of each other and consequent impact upon our running “togethering”. So, for example, Jacquelyn, the running-woman, was acknowledged to be a much more agile runner with better balance, in comparison with John, the running-man. As a result, she was stronger and faster on hill descents, and so would wait and circle around at the bottom of the hill or slope, in order to re-establish running-together when John joined her. The opposite tendency was manifest on ascending hills, where John was a much stronger and faster uphill climber, and would similarly circle at the summit or various points on the ascent, in order to effect togetherness. This same process of temporarily splitting and re-joining was also evident when very rough ground had to be traversed, risking stumbling, and we needed to give each other some space. Furthermore, our typifications also extended to the known trajectories adopted during the running of routes that were co-known:

Where there is choice of line (trajectory) say on a meadow or park, Jaqui generally just heads in the general direction of the route and doesn’t bother unduly about what is underfoot, as I’ve come to know after many years of running together. I’m not like that, though, and will always opt for smoother ground with less technical difficulty if at all possible. My peroneal tendons are a bit dodgy nowadays and I need to pay full attention over rough ground. If, as today, we

come off the narrow track on to the wider ground, I will automatically look for the smooth, and all of a sudden I find I'm running at the same pace but at a tangent to J's line. Now, I expect it to happen and of course it does. Then the terrain changes, my little tangent disappears and we are back on the same line again.

(Log 1)

Seasonal (and diurnal) fluctuations also emerged as salient in the data. Another typification pertained to our winter and late-autumn training sessions, when the only time we could train was after work, which meant training in the dark. Jacquelyn's myopic vision meant that, although she enjoyed night-time running in general, including when running solo, she tended always to seek a pathway which maximized the amount of light available (from streetlights, houses, shops) so as to be relatively confident of footfall. When running-together, this meant we frequently changed sides as the pattern of light fluctuated over the route, in order to afford her a relatively well-lit path. This process was so habitual in the dark months that it became almost pre-reflective (as if on "automatic pilot") on well-traversed routes, so that John, as the less visually challenged, responded to fluctuating light conditions, often moving behind Jacquelyn (never across, otherwise a fall might ensue!) to take up a new line that afforded her better sight of the approaching terrain.

Analogous typifications were found to relate to meteorological conditions. Whilst running-together in the spectrum of highly variable weather conditions in the UK can prove challenging, the data revealed that the most challenging conditions encountered were those generated by a combination of high temperatures and high humidity. These conditions were relatively arduous for John, but more so for Jacquelyn, and we came to typify our

different weather-related capacities. The result was an agreed but largely tacit strategy for enduring such conditions, which usually entailed a reduction in pace and a choice of running of routes that offered shade, so as to effect running-together rather than having to take separate routes:

Yuck, horrid run this evening, hot and humid – barely a breath of air and what there was smelt dusty and car-fume laden. J is pretty good in the heat, so long as he's well hydrated and his Celtic skin is covered in SPF 50 sunblock to protect from the UV rays. I'm hopeless though. We tried our best to find as much shade on the park this evening, and I did some repetitions under the trees by the football pitches whilst J ran just a few yards off me in the more direct sunlight. I know he slows down for me in these conditions too, especially when my asthma's duff in the clammy, pollen-drenched air. (Log 2)

At a further level of abstraction, we also constructed more generalized athletic typifications based upon an amalgam of observed corporeal characteristics gleaned from watching closely other runners as well as each other:

I have realized that I hold a picture of Jaqui running in my mind's eye. She is not a “digger”, by that I mean when she is going well or even just ok she does not force the terrain. Some runners do because they treat the terrain almost as enemy, as something to force themselves through. Usually with those kinds of runners you get a lot of arm, head and torso movement, classically like Zatopek I suppose! She is not like that, because she has got good balance generally, so she doesn't need to force it, rather she is very much a “floater”, when she is going well, that

is. Very compact, low shoulders, little sideways movement, medium knee lift and stride, quick feet, so she gets good foot placement over even rough ground, so she does not diminish pace. Head and neck always erect but not too erect, so there is a little bit of forward lean, which helps momentum. (Log 1)

These general typifications were fundamental to our running-together, and used as a template against which to evaluate our own and our partner's running form on a day to day basis. Any deviation from Jacquelyn's "floater" typification, for example, became immediately apparent to John, and signaled up the possibility that running-togetherness might require extra close monitoring and some intercorporeal adjustments. The typifications took various forms, embraced extra-corporeal features (terrain, climate, light, dark), involved various levels of abstraction, and were used routinely as a means of ongoing somatic intelligence, all used to achieve running-together. Should our attention drift off so that we (or one of us) were no longer undertaking the ongoing comparison between typification and "here-and-now" bodily presentation and comportment, then running-together could easily drift into running-apart. It is to this ongoing sensory-based monitoring that we now turn, in examining the fine auditory attunement (Allen-Collinson & Owton 2014b) and also the (rare) "performative utterances" (Turner 1975) used to achieve and sustain running-together, despite threats to such on-the-move togetherness.

Auditory attunement

As we and others have portrayed, the sensory dimension of sports participation has only recently started to receive academic attention from within the social sciences (Hockey & Allen-Collinson 2007, Sparkes 2009). Although there is not the scope here to address the

the rich sensory data generated by the project, which went far beyond the “classic five” senses usually conceptualized within “Western” thought (Allen-Collinson & Owton 2014a), in this section and the next we consider some of our sensory ways of knowing, cohering around the acoustic and the visual. First, we address the specific ways of “acoustic knowing” (Feld 2000) we developed over many years of running-together. As Feld (2000) argues, sound and our awareness of “sonic presence” constitute powerful forces shaping everyday sense-making activity, generating a specific “acoustemology” (an acoustic epistemology) based on the ways in which the sensual, bodily experiencing of sound generates a particular bodily way of knowing. Relatedly, Bull and Back (2003) highlight the role of “deep listening” that demands of its practitioners careful auditory attention, and attunement to the nuanced and multiple layers of meaning enfolded in sound. Furthermore, the importance of various forms of “non-symbolic sonorous expressions” is examined by Vannini et al. (2010, p. 331), who include within this term the sounds of non-musical, non-linguistic bodily processes such as sneezing, coughing or rattling of teeth. As emerged from our research, noisy, heavy, labored breathing, panting, wheezing, coughing, spluttering, grunting, and groaning were all “non-symbolic sonorous expressions” (Vannini et al. 2010, p. 331) made during running, and to which our training partner became highly attuned in evaluating how well the other was going. As Jacquelyn suffered for some time from exercise induced asthma (EIA) at the time of our running-together, John became highly attuned to the importance of breathing noises in gauging her going, and also developed a body of somatic knowledge regarding potential problematic elements that might cause breathing difficulties or provoke an asthma attack, such as high levels of pollutants or allergens:

I could see (and hear!) that Jaqui was having a difficult time this evening in Newport (industrial town). Her asthma has been pretty good of late and she no longer routinely takes her Becotide or Ventolin [types of inhaler] unless the air is really polluted. But this evening was hot and humid and Tredegar Park is surrounded by heavy motorway and main road traffic – you can almost see the dust from it drift across the playing fields. I know the park much better than she does, so can find a route that takes us a bit away from the worst pollution. Could hear her struggling to breathe, that kind of wheezy, rattly sound always makes me anxious; she's a bit of a head-banger at times too, stubbornly refuses to take an inhaler unless it's so bad she really can't run properly. Seems daft [foolish] to me. So this evening, I gave her plenty of "room to breathe" and dropped the pace a bit, whilst keeping an ear out for any signs of her breathing getting worse. (Log 1)

Although John does not suffer from EIA, Jacquelyn would attend to his breathing patterns in an analogous way, picking up aural cues as to whether he was running with ease or struggling, and making continual adjustments to pace to ensure running-together was maintained. Both of us would take into account external contextual factors when arriving at our evaluations. So, for example, if we were ascending an incline or running over heavy ground (ploughed fields were not a favorite), we would both anticipate hearing heavier breathing, and only if one of us sounded to be struggling more than anticipated in the specific conditions, would we make the pace adjustment.

In addition to the "non-symbolic sonorous expressions" (Vannini et al. 2010) we expressed, sometimes unwittingly, other aural cues were used to evaluate a partner's running-in-the-world. Being able to hold a conversation with ease and without sign of

breathlessness provided a good indicator of relative ease of going. After so many years and miles of running-together, direct questions as to the other's state of being were generally unnecessary, indeed superfluous (even irritating), as were statements about our own individual "going". We did, however, on rare occasions where there might potentially be some ambiguity as to which line we should take, particularly whether single-file running might be necessary, resort to verbalization. This would happen on routes where one of us had greater familiarity (as in the instance above where John was more familiar with a particular park) or where there was a sudden, unexpected change in conditions:

Running the park route during the long winter nights mostly depends on enough light filtering over to our route from the floodlights of the nearby athletics stadium. Usually it's fine when athletics training is scheduled, but occasionally for some unknown reason the lights are not on at the allotted hour or they go off suddenly. When that happens we are unexpectedly plunged into darkness. Usually we run side by side where the route around the park edge is barely lit by adjacent street lamps, the arcs of which provide just enough illumination for us to be able to make out a faint pathway over the grass. That's fine unless the floodlights go out suddenly... Without the lighting, and without the summer flags in place to warn the unwary runner, the holes can be distinctly hazardous. My myopic eyes are pretty poor in the gloom, even in the twilight, so as we approach the golf hazard zone, John often grunts, "On me!" - meaning he should take the lead for that particular section and I must follow "obediently" (ha!) in his wake. Inevitably, that sometimes leads to a few strides of discontent, dispute and jostling, more often than not ritualized... (Log 2)

In these relatively rare instances, we drew upon a form of “performative utterance” (Turner 1975), that is one where talk also refers to a specific action, at least for someone with insider knowledge of the particular utterance and what to do on hearing it.

These, then, were some of the intercorporeal, auditory attunement practices in which we engaged as part of the “auditory work” undertaken in order to establish and maintain running-together, particularly during instances where differences in our individual running-in-the-moment might have resulted in running-apart, had we not made corporeal adjustments. As we have highlighted elsewhere (Allen-Collinson & Leledaki 2014), singular sensory modality is highly uncommon, and for the most part, our lived experience is synaesthetic in that multiple senses “work” in concert¹. As Merleau-Ponty (2001: 221), argued: “no sensation is atomic, all sensory experience presupposes a certain field, hence co-existences...”. This synaesthesia certainly emerged in our findings, and the auditory was often experienced as strongly interwoven with other senses such as the visual, to which we now turn our analytic gaze.

The interrogatory glance

As identified above, whilst we routinely engaged in auditory work, another key means of achieving intercorporeal athletic synchrony was via visual work, particularly the mutual “interrogatory glance” (Sudnow 1972) toward a training partner. A glance it has to be, because the rapid forward trajectory of running demands a focus of considerable ocular attention on the emerging terrain. There is a pattern of eye movement from the front to the side and from the side to the front, which intermittently evaluates a running partner (or

¹ The term ‘synaesthesia’ is more commonly used to refer to one modality of sensory experience (e.g., the auditory) being experienced via another modality (e.g., the visual), so that for example a person experiences colours when listening to music.

competitor). Apart from occasions when running in single-file was required, this sideways glancing was how we achieved running-together. It is no exaggeration to say that training partners literally “run surveillance” on each other, via an active form of looking (Emmison & Smith 2000, p. 185). Over time there is the development of a “shared point of view” (Lee & Ingold 2006, p. 83) which constitutes a skilled ocular practice. Alongside auditory attunement, the “interrogatory glance” is used in order to achieve, for the most part, proximity, and a mutual pace during training sessions.

So, what might this mutual glancing take in? The focus is usually upon gleaning visual information about the corporeal form and going of one’s training partner. As portrayed above, we had constructed general typifications of each other as athletes when performing well, and these were used as templates against which other runs were compared and contrasted. The mutual glances took in our partner’s facial appearance: what were her/his eyes like, sunken or alert? Was his/her face relaxed and “loose” or tight, frowning or grimacing? Was the skin tone normal or flushed (the latter indicating extreme effort or heat)? Similarly, posture was scrutinized: how was the neck held, retracted or extended? How high or low were the shoulders; did they look tense? How were the arms held, low or high? What was her/his stride length like, extended or shuffling, low or high? Was s/he running with a lot of lateral movement or was s/he compact? Was s/he smooth in her stride or perhaps stumbling? Whilst we held typifications of each other’s good form, we also held analogous ones relating to a state of relative discomfort or *dys-ease* in Leder’s (1990) terms. The glance was essentially a “look, see and contrast” process. In Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) terms, the glance and the evaluation that occurred with it simultaneously constitute a process of habituated action. Some indicators occurred relatively frequently, for example, Jacquelyn’s skin flushing in high temperatures and high humidity, and thus

easily identifiable with her propensity to struggle with pace in such conditions. There were also from time to time happenings which were atypical, however, and only identifiable because the glance was informed by a long-term understanding of the minutiae of the other's corporeal propensities when running:

Because we have been running together such a long time now, signs that each other is struggling a bit are quite obvious, at least to us as partners. Sometimes, though, it's just a matter of minuscule changes, noticed suddenly and unexpectedly, which alert us to problems. This afternoon was such an instance. We ran down the canal towpath to Glasson Dock and were happily clicking off the miles, sun shining off the water, relatively smooth underfoot; everything seemed fine and good. Then I realized John was drifting off the pace, just a tiny bit - maybe a yard. He was also staring, frozen faced, more intently than usual at the ground, clearly concentrating. The other big give away was his hands - normally held fingers turned into palms, with thumbs lightly pressed on top, but this time he had really clenched fists and the tendons in his forearms were standing out more than usual. "Okay, Bud?" I asked, and he grunted, "No, gut problems!" We dropped the pace until we came alongside bushes and trees, and he disappeared for five minutes! Knowing John well, I knew better than to "fuss" or ask if he wanted help. He would always call out if he needed assistance anyway. Out he emerged, his Celtic skin looking paler than usual, and we just jogged slowly the rest of the route home, trying to make it easier on his tender stomach. (Log 2)

Running-together requires the co-ordinated management of pace so that proximity is maintained. In the main, our proximity when running side by side was just a few feet from

each other's shoulder; this positioning in space indicating to us that the pace for each of us was tolerable in the moment. Holding this position requires work, however: a continuous "practical reflexivity" (Weeks 1996), a perpetual glancing at and viewing of the other out of the corner of the eye, whilst maintaining position. Whilst the visual work required to achieve this on smooth roads is considerable, even greater effort is needed when traversing rough terrain with uneven footing. Our mutual trajectory was usually in as straight a line as possible (terrain and other physical features permitting), so that any excessive deviation from that trajectory became immediately noticed and, if there were no extenuating circumstances, was categorized as an indicator of fatigue or other challenge to performance:

We have been thinking a lot about how we run "tight" together, which is made possible because we are watching each other continually. And we see and we adjust, see and adjust, adjust our footfall and our direction, so it's a kind of constant improvised choreography between us as we go along. That normal pattern is only usually highlighted, when it is "breached" (to quote Garfinkel) when we don't get it right; and that seems, according to our log notes, to occur in two principal ways. The first is when on rough ground or uneven pavements one of us hits that ground at a bad angle, what that does is it either propels one into the path of the other, resulting in collision! Or, conversely, it sharply propels the person away from the other, off the normal trajectory. Both results are very noticeable and immediately mentally noted. The second is when we are running along both maintaining the pace, but one of us starts moving in and out of proximity. In our notes, we have called that "wavering", or "drifting off", a sort of shifting of the ratio of proximity to each other. So, unless there are any obstacles, our "comfort distance" is

usually a couple of feet from each other, then a little more, then reverting to a couple of feet apart, and then drifting off again, then back again, and so on over the duration of the run. This seems to occur when we are running well enough to maintain the pace, but the extra energy and focus required to run consistently “tight” over difficult ground means that it is fairly immediately apparent if one or the other isn’t going too well that day, or that moment.

(Log 3)

In the case of the above divergence, usually the unaffected partner would ask the other if s/he was alright or would, by a process of trial and error, adjust the pace until tight running-together was again achieved.

In this section, we have focused upon the role of visual work in achieving running-together and thus training-together, a routine practice which resulted in the development of a very particular interrogative glance, thoroughly *attuned* (Ingold, 2000) to each other’s movement and somatic comportment. Despite the visual work being undertaken generally via swift but evaluative glances, given the rapid movement and the need to focus visually on terrain and environment, the interrogatory glance was usually sufficiently focused and detailed to take in a myriad of different features, as portrayed above. Again, in making our visual checks and evaluations, we drew upon typifications of what was “normal” in our partner’s appearance and mode of movement. Should s/he diverge noticeably from the norm, then this signaled that remedial action might be required if running-together were to be maintained.

Concluding comments – intuition or attunement?

This chapter has highlighted the importance of mundane, interactional and intercorporeal practices, which constitute the foundational elements of sport, and which to date have generally been neglected and left “unmarked” analytically (Brekhus 1998). We have also suggested the value of a phenomenologically-inspired approach to understanding the sensory-based cooperative activity amongst sports participants; a perspective greatly under-utilized in existing research on sports and sporting embodiment. In the narrative above, we have portrayed in some detail how we actually *achieved* distance running-together, and more specifically training-together. This for us was an everyday practice for nearly two decades, producing a finely tuned sensibility to each other’s running form. This can be conceptualized as approaching a form of shared “intuition”, used to achieve togetherness when training. In popular discourse, intuition is often contrasted with logic, and also associated with an immediate emotional response to interaction and contexts. It can also be understood via Bergson’s (1903/1961:49) academic definition as “the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it”. Our intuition was not of either ilk, but rather was built and practiced using the phenomenologically-attuned modes we have outlined, which were shared and resulted in a practical, lived *empathy* between us. At the most immediate and sensory level there was the particular habituated action (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1962) of seeing and hearing each other in a highly attentive way. These sensory perceptions themselves became categorized mutually by us, so that, in Schütz’s (1967) terms, we typified each other. Built upon and interacting with these sensory perceptions was a series of typifications at higher levels of abstraction, which encapsulated our mutual form over different kinds of terrain and in different climatic conditions. At the most abstract level, we typified each other as being certain generic kinds of distance

runners (e.g., “floaters”, “diggers”). Our immediate sensory perceptions also interacted with the differing kinds of typification we constructed, to form our “stock of knowledge at hand” (Schütz 1967). It was this resource that we used moment-to-running-moment to perceive, construct, effect and manage training-together in what might be considered by outsiders to be an intuitive fashion, but which actually demanded considerable and perpetual ongoing sensory and cognitive collaborative work.

Pre-publication copy

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