Hockey, John (2013). Knowing the 'Going': the sensory evaluation of distance running. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 5 (1), 127-141.

Knowing the 'Going': the sensory evaluation of distance running

Dr John Hockey

University of Gloucestershire

Published in Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 2013, 5 (1) 127-141.

Abstract

To date there has been little research into the mundane direct embodiment of sporting activity. This paper seeks to contribute to a small but developing literature by portraying how distance running training sessions are experienced in a sensory way and how that direct embodied knowledge is used to categorise and evaluate the practice of ongoing training.

Key Words: body, knowledge, mundane, phenomenology, running, senses

Knowing the 'Going': the sensory evaluation of distance running

Introduction

While there is now a wide spectrum of research on the sporting body from a diverse range of perspectives, it is still possible to claim that few of these studies are entrenched in the actual embodied experiences of doing sport**,** as various authors have recently noted (e.g. Hockey and Allen Collinson 2007, Sparkes 2009). However, a small literature on direct embodiment within sport and physical culture has now began to emerge (for reviews of the former see Hockey and Allen Collinson 2007, Sparkes 2009, and for the latter see Allen Collinson and Hockey 2011, pp. 3-4). It is also possible to identify another area of sports study which is under-developed: namely, that of the mundane. As Breckhus (2000) has indicated, forms of mundane activity pervade social life generally, but much of it remains 'unmarked' or unseen by social researchers. He (2000, p. 5) goes onto note that in contrast 'extraordinary' social processes have been unduly favoured by researchers propelled by particular phenomena being statistically interesting or politically important. Yet as Giddens (1984, p.60) asserts both the stable continuity of individual selves and social institutions are dependent upon the continuous reproduction of mundane routine events. Hence, the importance of investigating the mundane both generally and specifically within sport, wherein to date little attention has been paid to the mundane (Crossley 2006, pp. 24-25). As Lynch (2001) highlights what is really at stake is not so much the theoretical problem of order but the substantive production of order on singular occasions, which is routinely and mundanely accomplished every-day. So this paper's purpose is to contribute to that small number of studies on the embodied mundane activity of sport

which underpin it's other interactional and institutional processes. It portrays how distance runners experience, interpret and use embodied information within their mundane, routine, daily, training sessions. Felski (1999-2000, p.18) views the components of the mundane and 'everyday' in social life as being: time, space and modality. To elaborate, temporal in terms of the daily repetition of particular distances run; spatial in that activities take place on particular kinds of familiar terrain designated as particular social spaces known as training routes; modal in that the characteristic way of experiencing daily training is habit – mundane activity which far outweighs runners' involvement in racing, but constitutes the essential foundation which allows effective racing to take place. The paper is structured in the following manner. Firstly, the data upon which it is based is explained. Secondly, it outlines the main theoretical and conceptual resources used. Thirdly, it portrays certain kinds of distance running mundane sensory experiences. Fourthly, it depicts how those experiences are categorised and used as knowledge in-action.

Autoethnographic Data and Analysis

Whilst having its critics (e.g. Atkinson and Delamont 2006), autoethnography also has **a** number of proponents who have developed powerful justifications for its use (e.g. Allen Collinson and Hockey 2005). Autoethnography emphasises the linkage between themes within the author's experience and broader cultural and subcultural processes. In order to contextualise the events to be described, it is first of all necessary to make visible some "accountable" knowledge in terms of athletic biographies. My female training partner/co-researcher and I (author) ran together habitually for 19 years, both with a background in distance running which ranged from 5-mile races to marathons. This required a commitment to training on 6 or 7 days a week and, on occasions, twice

a day. Coincidentally, during the same wind-swept week, we both suffered knee injuries. It was apparent at the onset of these injuries that they did not constitute the usual small niggles which plague the habitual runner. Consequently, we rapidly arrived at a collective decision to systematically document our response to these injuries. The process of injury and recovery, and its documentation, took a full two years. Runners tend to keep logs of their daily training performance, so the discipline of daily recording information was already in situ. Rather than solely compile training logs, instead we constructed logs on the process of injury-rehabilitation, which also encompassed our collective and individual endeavours to return to the status of fully functioning athletes. Each of us constructed a personal log (indicated at the end of the extracts from field notes as Log 1 or Log 2 respectively) which was individually and jointly interrogated for emerging themes, using a form of the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). We then created a third collaborative log made up of these joint analytic themes. Micro tape recorders constituted the daily means of recording our experiences, and these recordings were then transcribed. The collaborative log was constructed within a day or two of the events occurring. A by-product of our data analysis was that we became aware of our athletic 'stock of knowledge' (Benson and Hughes 1983, p.52) which we had previously taken for granted when running. The documentation of this was then added to our initial main analytical task, that of recording our response to being injured. A response which interestingly revealed no gender based differences (Allen Collinson, 2005, p.234) but did reveal how our athletic identities were placed in considerable jeopardy which was surmounted by ongoing 'identity work' (Hockey 2005). The data which follows constitutes part of the aforementioned stock of knowledge, and is composed of certain kinds of sensory knowledge which is privileged in this narrative for the purpose of articulating a

particular analytic account. Other data which reveals more directly the interrelationship between emotion and athletic embodiment has already been published (Allen Collinson 2005).

Theorizing and Conceptualizing the Data

As Chris Shilling has recently noted (2008, p.5), 'key insights' from the 'flexible framework' made up of the pragmatist works of Mead, Dewey and James, can be used to theorize 'the *interactions* that exist between the external and internal environments of embodied action'. Data will be presented which encompasses the internal felt consciousness and embodied, 'sense making' of runners as they engaged with the external practice of traversing daily training routes and interacting between themselves as training partners. Within this interaction, Shilling (2008) portrays a number of useful conceptual insights which are helpful for situating this paper theoretically within a pragmatist framework. Firstly, building on Dewey, he points out (p.10) that it is via the senses that individuals interact with, and gain information from, their immediate environment. The empirical field logs presented here are predominantly comprised of such sensory based data. Secondly, he notes (p.12) the central importance of *habit* to pragmatist thought which has tended to be forgotten by contemporary sociology. Utilizing the three aforementioned theorists, he defines habit as the subject's 'routinised modes of behavior that are more or less effective in 'joining' them to, and enabling them to manage, their surroundings' (p.12). Daily distance running training constitutes such an embodied habit as training routes are covered via this 'habitual continuity' (p.12). A habit within which sensory data is accumulated, interpreted and acted upon. As Shilling (2008, p. 15) notes: 'Habits reside in and shape the deepest recesses of the embodied subject'. Thirdly, he points out that, within the pragmatist tradition, when embodied habits become disrupted this constitute

a potential ‘ crisis’ (p.18) for the embodied subject. Distance running is an activity replete with such embodied crises in the form of illness and injury which threaten or stop athletic performance. Fourthly, Shilling (p.19) points out that for the pragmatist tradition the surmounting of such crises by subjects constitutes ‘creative’ action, which in the case at hand entails runners being analytic about their own training schedules and modifying them so as to avoid further threats to performance. Having situated the paper theoretically within the pragmatist framework expounded by Shilling, it now remains to portray a number of other concepts which are also useful for making analytic sense of the ethnographic data. These emanate from the phenomenological work of Thomas Csordas and the pragmatist concerns of John Dewey . Whilst these writers are rooted in different intellectual traditions they nevertheless display considerable congruence (Shilling, 2008, p.10) in their mutual non-Cartesian position and concern with embodied habits. Embodied habits form what Csordas (1993, p. 148) has conceptualised as specific ‘somatic modes of attention’, particular ways of embodiment in the social world. In his article he usefully depicts the following sporting example:

> The imaginal rehearsal of bodily movements by athletes is a highly elaborated somatic mode of attention, as is the heightened sensitivity to muscle tone and the appetite for motion associated with health-conscious and habitual exercise (p.139).

For Csordas, particular somatic modes of attention are made up of particular embodied practices/habits which need to be revealed analytically. To do so using the ethnographic data use is made of Dewey’s (1980) work on aesthetics. When examining the attention sports studies have devoted to aesthetics (e.g. Stranger 1999, Inglis and Hughson 2000, Scott 2008, Griggs 2009) one finds that the sporting aesthetic is

largely equated with activity described as expressive, evocative, beautiful, sacred, sublime and artistic, a stance which mirrors activity in the wider field of aesthetics (Haapala 2005, p.39). However, this position neglects other important dimensions of sporting experience, namely struggle and the mundane. As Leddy (2005, p. 8) states when calling for an aesthetics of the mundane, such an analytic lens should include not just the evocative but also displeasure. The strength of Dewey's work on aesthetics, which one finds very occasionally applied to sport (e.g. Maivorsdotter and Lundvall 2009), lies in how he conceptualises the term initially. Firstly, Dewey (1980, p. 2) places aesthetics in the realm of the mundane, of everyday life, so that any kind of experience can be aesthetic as long as it constitutes an intensification of ordinary experience. Secondly, he notes that people are often struggling to maintain an equilibrium with their surrounding environment (p.12). That striving, that intensification, that constant adaptation and re-adaptation constitutes a process out of which a particular aesthetic consciousness can be formed. For Dewey (p.62) a perpetually harmonious relationship with one's immediate environment will not continually produce an aesthetic experience; instead what is needed are periodic injections of vitality, the latter being a condition of intensity. As he puts it: 'Experience in the degree that it is experience is heightened vitality'(p.18). In sport such vitality is at its maximum in the context of daily (and therefore mundane) training and periodic competition, for an embodied struggle occurs to construct an equilibrium habitually. Sensory experiences which are pleasant and unpleasant quickly invoke feelings, which themselves are inexorably connected to movement as training sessions and races are completed. It is this encompassing combination of agreeableness and disagreeableness (Maivorsdotter and Lundvall, 2009, p. 267) which makes Dewey's work useful for examining the embodiment of distance running. These feelings are made up of a

combination of corporeal sensations and emotional reactions to them. An embodied process, which for Dewey (1980) in its acting out, expresses the core of aesthetic being through what he terms 'wholeness'. In distance running, that wholeness is all encompassing because just as the endless training miles are done by athletes, those miles are also done to them. This forms a reciprocal interaction which Dewey (cited in Tiles 1990, p. 57) terms 'the pervasive operative presence of the whole in the part and of the part in the whole'. In the case at hand the sensory based perceptions of immersion in training are combined as a resource which is used by runners to categorise their movement: in that sense they are making aesthetic judgements. It is these feelings, perceptions and meaningful categorisations that the paper now proceeds to examine.

Knowing the 'Going' of Distance Running

When distance runners run they experience 'form' which is the totality of their experience as they move over ground. This totality encompasses corporeal sensations, linked emotions, together with an ongoing cognitive evaluation of those latter two features. This synthesised process combines the distance running body with the distance running mind, making such experiences fully embodied. On occasion, narratives within the UK distance running subculture about how runners are training or racing, will feature the concept of 'form', thus ' I am on form'. However, more usually the concept is expressed by subcultural members using the term 'going'. For example, 'I'm going well' or 'I'm going badly'. Runners then know how they are going not just in a cognitive way by looking at their watches during or after sessions but also in a sensuous way. This self knowledge allows runners to evaluate their athletic endeavours

in both the realms of training and racing. When runners say they are going well or badly they are making, according to Dewey's (1980) position, an aesthetic judgement by categorising an intensive experience. Running well or badly demands substantial physiological effort , and it is no exaggeration to state that distance runners are intimately aware of gradations of physical discomfort encompassing a spectrum of fatigue and pain. That effort is felt, then perceived and subsequently evaluated cognitively to arrive at an aesthetic judgement of 'going'. Within each training session, regardless of its objective and regardless of its degree of ardour, runners aim to achieve a *condition of relative ease*, that is an embodied state which allows individuals to accomplish their training objectives in what Dewey (1980) would call 'equilibrium'. In such a condition runners may well be working very hard physiologically, however, they are not overloaded and hence not experiencing having to stop running or markedly slow down through fatigue or retire through injury. What constitutes 'relative ease' is directly linked to the individual's degree of fitness at specific points in time. Running fitness is built up by a gradual progression of training loads developed over months, so that individuals reach plateaus of fitness, each one building upon its predecessor until the limits of the athletes physiological capacity are exploited ideally to the full during discrete competitive seasons (e.g. cross country season, track season etc). Runners then understand in a cognitive, but also corporeal fashion, what plateau they are on and what constitutes relative ease for them at these particular points in space and time; hence, their capacity to make aesthetic judgements about their 'going'. Interrogation of the ethnographic data identified two specific aesthetic dimensions of the distance running experience which produced a combined resource which runners used to make such judgments. In practice, these dimensions and their component parts are inextricably

inter-linked when runners are actually training or racing, but for purposes of analysis they are depicted separately.

The Aesthetic of Feeling 'The Going'

Ingold (2000, p.166) has gone so far as to assert that 'locomotion not cognition must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity' and certainly running exposes athletes to a plethora of physical experiences. Such a sensory assemblage provides direct perceptual feedback of movement and constitutes the first and arguably the most corporeally intimate of aesthetic dimensions, for as Leder (1990, p.23) has noted, the 'body is always a field of immediately lived sensation...(its) presence fleshed out by a ceaseless stream of kinesthesias, cutaneous and visceral sensations...'. Whilst analysing the data, it became apparent that post-structural criticism has exerted little influence on the distance running worldview of the athletes in question, as a series of inter- linked binary oppositions (Levi Strauss 1969) were in operation, rooted in and constructed from direct sensory perceptions. These constituted the basic evaluative categories used by the author and his training partner/co-researcher to understand how they were running during each training session: each binary opposition is composed of a spectrum of embodied knowledge encompassing negative and positive sensations about the movement of running which allows a judgement of 'going' to be made.

Soft and Hard

When distance runners start moving, the muscles and tendons are put under considerable load. There is an initial assumption that at the start of training sessions the body will be a little stiff before it becomes thoroughly warmed up and likewise there is an assumption that at the end of sessions some degree of tiredness will be experienced. However, once the first mile of a training run is completed, athletes expect this initial phase of physical adjustment to settle down and the core of the run in terms of its

embodiment to develop. In the event of a training session being categorised as 'good going' there was a direct relationship between that evaluation and how musculature felt as movement proceeded:

> ...when sessions are like that there is no tightness in the muscles. You can feel all the muscles working. Crucially they are flexible, they contract and expand, doing their business. In a way despite the work they are doing, they remain relaxed, and sort of soft. For example, even at the end of that kind of session, you can lean back and tap your calf with your fingers and it will still be soft. (Individual Log 2)

In contrast, in the case of the run being defined as problematic, there was a strong association between that categorisation and hardness being initially present or developing in the musculature as the run proceeds:

> Anxious today as I started to get a stiff left glut (gluteal) after about 2 miles, so there I am thinking 'any minute it will run through the whole kinetic chain - IT (iliotibial) band and the hamstring'. Everything starts to tighten to harden up and your running has no fluidity. It feels like screws tightening. You are judging all the time whether you are on the verge of actually pulling a muscle. The least it becomes is an uncomfortable run. (Individual Log 1)

Once muscles start to harden the reciprocal haptic relationship between the running body and its training terrain, corresponding to what Merleau-Ponty (1962) has termed 'reversibility', becomes problematic as the impact of the latter on the former causes musculature to tighten even further.

Heavy and Light

A further negative categorisation which focused upon muscles was the problem of their feeling 'heavy', via the sensation of pressure from mechanoreceptors (Patterson 2007,

p. ix). In general, interrogation of the data revealed that the main perceived cause of feeling no spring in the legs was the sheer effort of running mileage day after day, which periodically meant that the quadriceps in particular would display a degree of fatigue, manifesting itself in heavy legs:

> This morning's session was just a slog, the quads were heavy right from the start. It's like they (quads) are 'pregnant', but full of iron, so instead of pushing you around they drag you back as they feel so heavy. J gave me an enquiring look after three miles and I just muttered darkly to him: 'dead quads' and he nodded with understanding, knowing just what that means. (Individual Log 2)

In contrast, sessions were documented which were felt to be devoid of heaviness, and distances were covered with an ethereal quality so movements were deemed almost effortless:

> Occasionally you get training runs which are simply extraordinary. We went and did a 6 and everything felt wonderful, almost ethereal in a way, it was like running in reduced gravity. As if I passed almost above the ground effortlessly, just lightness personified… the unbearable lightness of being? No, the very bearable lightness of being! I could have gone on and on...
>
> (Individual Log 2)

Noisy and Quiet ('Almost')

We found a further binary opposition apparent within the data, constructed on the presence or absence of what both runners termed 'chattering' or sometimes 'grumbling' or 'moaning'. This was defined as the running body interacting with the running mind in two distinct forms. The first kind of noise involved an internal dialogue between the mind and body parts which were not behaving themselves. The latter was defined as pain/ soreness which, whilst not causing the run to be aborted, was nevertheless present

and felt as movement occurred. The hamstrings, tendons (peronials, achilles etc), hip flexors and adductors were identified as especially prone to being noisy. This physical noise, to which the mind paid attention, was either new to the particular session of the moment, or possessed a historical pedigree of strain or injury and was now choosing to 'grumble' again:

> You get runs when you are going along and there is constant internal conversation going on with your physical bits. My peronials are often 'sticky' in cold weather and they are sore because their range of movement is not gliding but sticky. So they piss and moan and grumble. I reply with my internal thoughts, sometimes sympathising –'poor little peronials', sometimes admonishing 'now get your act together move properly', or sometimes like this morning when I am wimpy I moan back – 'oh no why are you acting up now?' (Individual Log 1)

We found that the second form of noise involving dialogue between the body and mind focused upon breathing patterns, for whilst the athlete is propelled by muscles and a skeleton, she/he is also propelled by a respiratory system. Breath or respiration provides a constant and almost instantaneous feedback on the state of every training session, as runners listen to and evaluate their own breathing patterns. These patterns of inhalation and exhalation constitute the mechanism via which internal autonomic physiological processes interrelate with socially mediated or external processes (Lyon, 1997). Thus, hearing and listening to their breathing patterns offers runners a direct resource with which to evaluate the state of their physical being: embodied evidence upon which to categorise their 'going'. It constitutes a particular form of self orientated 'acoustic knowing' (Feld 1996, p. 97)

> Nothing fancy, just get out there and run seven miles easy. The problem was it wasn't easy, felt out of sorts right from the start. Normally when going up the

> first hill I would just click into it, shorten the stride, work the arms lean into it, get the rhythm going with the breathing. I couldn't do it though, I was all over the place like some overweight jogger! Uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! I could hear myself wheezing and moaning and gasping. It was a struggle all the way round... (Individual Log 1)

In the above extract, not surprisingly, the internal dialogue which accompanied the respiratory activity, was about feeling like an overweight jogger and thus going badly. So training sessions where physiological chatter was prevalent became categorised as 'noisy'. The complete or relative absence of such chatter resulted in runs where the responding internal dialogue about the bodies 'grumblings' were completely absent. These sessions were designated 'quiet' runs and invariably correlated with 'going well', regardless of the tempo of the session. Quiet runs were not actually totally quiet, as there was an internal dialogue even on those kind of runs about the run itself (e.g 'I'm going well today'); going was established by evaluating other sensory activity deemed unproblematic and therefore not grumbling.

Flying and Faltering

Running is about generating and maintaining physical momentum and another binary opposition rooted in sensory activity which centred on that momentum was evident in the data. To achieve forward movement requires impetus and this can be felt in a number of ways, notably via rhythm and timing. The former can be defined 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'(Goodridge 1999, p.43). Rhythm then orchestrates the flow of action and simultaneously is constitutive of that action. Distance runners then establish a rhythm built primarily on leg cadence and accompanying respiration, and attempt to hold that

rhythm. Intimately connected to rhythm is a singular sense of embodied timing, a sense which tells runners how they are running in terms of tempo: a visceral understanding based in sensations emanating from moving muscles, ligaments, skin, tendons and organs, particularly lungs (Leder 1990). So runners understand the tempo at which they are running, not just via their watches but also via their felt corporeality, a sense learnt from running thousands of training and racing miles. They also know what kind of temporal rhythm they want to maintain and should be capable of doing for various training sessions, given their understanding of the fitness plateau they are inhabiting. However, as Tuan (1993, p.36) has perceptively noted, 'Movement is thus like health, usually taken for granted until there is some lack in it'. The lack for runners is when they struggle to maintain the pace they have envisioned for a given session; the pace then becomes defined as faltering:

> You can usually (on a good day!) feel energy when you are running and when you haven't got any it's so darn obvious. Today was a 'nothing in the tank run'. It's kind of as if you are empty inside, with nothing to draw on, no fuel so to speak. Today was not to do speed work or anything tough, just get out there and run the base mileage. But straightaway it was obvious I could not keep up the normal pace I usually do for that kind of session. So it becomes just get around the route without falling apart. And you think 'oh right, it's one of those sessions'. So dreary! (Individual Log 2)

These kind of runs are etched into the corporeality and consciousness of runners by the physical and psychological struggle to complete them. They may not occur that often but the effort it takes to complete them gives them a symbolic resonance which is logged in the running memory. The polar opposite of such faltering sessions are those which are full of an abundance of energy, with which the running body positively eats

up the distance, maintaining the momentum of the training session, pouring out the cyclical rhythm, completing the miles at the desired tempo:

> When you have a really good run there is always plenty of push in it. There is always lots of power in the legs and you feel as if you are flying along, so it kind of builds on itself in a controlled way and you hit the rhythm and stay in it. When you are running like that the power inside gives you confidence, which gives you sort of more power to drive it forward. (Individual Log 1)

Compact and Disjointed

Whilst distance running is about endurance, power and speed in varying relative combinations, it is also about posture. Runners do not all have the same posture but they all evolve a running style which allows them to maximise their forward momentum. This postural positioning is not always the most biomechanically efficient in a technical sense; rather it is a physical practice which they have evolved via extensive training, one made up of the angle of the head and torso, the placing of the feet, stride length and cadence, which shapes the 'specific gestures and postures' (Fehr 1987, p.159) of the distance running body produced on the basis of kinaesthetic information received when moving. Runners know corporeally when they are going well, and part of that pertains to how they feel about the alignment of their bodies:

> Women have usually characterised me physically as 'neat' (not gorgeous unfortunately) and when I am running that's how I am. Sort of compact so everything is aligned in a fashion. Over the years I have come to know how some of my particular bits feel when they are in the best position. Like my chin being dropped slightly which means everything elongates and there is an ever so slight forward lean. I am sort of rising up out of the pelvis. Then my arms are close in and I gently clench my fingers with thumbs down on top of them. When this

> occurs what I feel overall is compact and there is no loss of energy: everything is going forward in a controlled way. (Individual Log 1)

Again, in contrast, when the going is not satisfactory the bodily posture of runners begins to display compound negative characteristics:

> When one is struggling through a session it becomes immediately apparent....My neck retracts so that changes everything down the kinetic chain so instead of going forward I am beginning to go back slightly. Then my left arm which I used to years ago swing across my body causing back torsion which I learned to stop. But I have noticed when I am struggling that starts to come back which means the forward momentum is lessened and my back hates it. Also my right shoulder starts to hunch up which again I learnt to stop years ago, but it returns like a ghost! My stride length begins to shorten and when it gets extreme my balance even starts to become questionable and as a result footfall becomes unsure. I feel totally disjointed nothing seems to fit together. Yesterday was that horrible ! (Individual Log 1)

The five binary oppositions depicted above form the first aesthetic dimension and constitute one of the embodied resources which the runners used to evaluate and categorise their training performances.

The Aesthetic of Seeing and Hearing 'The 'Going'

The paper now turns to a second aesthetic dimension and embodied resource evident from the data. This dimension, whilst located in the sensory, is arguably less directly so in terms of felt sensations for at its core it is dependent on the visual and aural. As previously illustrated, runners develop a kinaesthetic awareness of their posture, and this becomes lodged in the mind's eye. An imaginative image of oneself is then forged and after thousands of training miles one knows sensorially how one is running and one

possesses an internal conception of oneself doing so. This is periodically reinforced by actually seeing how one is running. Such glimpses occur through the fleeting 'glance' (Sudnow 1972) as house windows, and shop fronts are passed en route, and the running body becomes interrogated critically for its form. In the main, the relationship between imaginative image, sensations and reflected image was found to be mutually confirmatory. However, on occasion we found a disjuncture between sensations, internal image and what is actually seen:

> There is a long office window which has some kind of mirror properties – when we run past, we try to remember to check ourselves out for form. The problem is sometimes it gets a bit surreal with a mismatch - when one is struggling and you sometimes see the image and think: 'Hmmm, how come *she* is looking a lot better than I am feeling??' (Individual Log 2)

A second kind of visual interrogation of how one was moving was identified during certain periods of the year, when another kind of seeing becomes possible:

> A rather less than obvious visual monitoring which has become apparent is that we check ourselves out on stretches of route where we produce shadow. Our shadows constitute another source of running intelligence and by monitoring them one can glean how we are going. It's most apparent with the upper parts of the body, namely the head, shoulders and arms. If there is excessive movement of those it's always correlated with feeling like shit! (Individual Log 1)

We categorised a third kind of visual means of evaluating going via the posture and demeanour of one's training partner. Over thousands of training miles we learnt to evaluate each other's form quite precisely, based on physical elements. Thus a leaning

back of the upper body, tenseness of arms or shoulders, and shortened stride length all indicated unease. The rolling of the head, torso moving laterally, stumbling or the dragging of feet were also other negative indicators, as were sunken eyes, frowning, tense jaw line and grimaces. This visual intelligence was simultaneously accompanied by paying considerable attention to the training partner's breathing patterns, for example, as Downey (2005, p. 100) has remarked 'the trained ear is emphatically intercorporeal; that is, it hears relationships with other people's bodies'. Both runners were then alert to each other's breathing patterns in terms of their rate and style as well as a spectrum of groaning, sighing and grunting. On the basis of this combination of visual and aural information, negative indicators triggered enquiring looks of concern, and ultimately direct questions to elicit information about the other's general state of running-being, or possibly a mutual adjustment of pace if necessary.

So far the paper has portrayed two aesthetic dimensions of the distance running experience which function as a combined embodied resource for evaluating 'going'.

The Categorisation of Going

On examining the data it became apparent that this resource was used in turn to generate a number of practitioner analytic constructs. As Stacey (1990, p. 142) has noted, ordinary people 'develop explanatory theories to account for their material, social and bodily circumstances'. These constructs resembled Weber's 'ideal types' (Runciman 1978). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, pp.195-196) have remarked that such ideal types are not intended to 'correspond in every detail to all observed cases', rather they are' intended to capture key features of social phenomena'. This is how these practitioner constructs were used by both runners, namely the general features, comprised of binary oppositions, together with images and sounds of oneself and one's training partner evident during each training session, were assembled into a composite

of sensory evidence. In turn, on the basis of such evidence we made a judgment, and hence a categorisation of each run.. As Blumer (1969, p. 163) has observed of people's objectifications from the sensory world in general, they constitute the 'means of transacting business with [their] environment.' Three practitioner constructs were manifest, so training sessions were categorised as: 'brill(iant)','ok' and 'crap':

> In trying to make sense of the data in terms of how we evaluate runs, it has become apparent we use three general categories.The question which puzzled us for a bit was 'why just three?' In effect we should have pondered on 'why more than three?' The answer is the usual taken for granted reason one initially fails to see, we don't need more so three suffices and other categories are unnecessary. (Collaborative Log)

In effect, such aesthetic judgements (Dewey, 1980) were permeated by pragmatism as, following Garfinkel (1967) we generated these constructs for 'all practical purposes' having no need for more elaborate schemata, so long as the tripartite categorisation allowed us to make sense of our training.

Those that were defined as 'brill'(iant) evidenced a high degree of correlation with the set of embodied sensations which formed the positive poles of the aforementioned binary oppositions (soft, light, quiet, flying, compact), together with positive visual and auditory indicators. In direct contrast, sessions defined as 'crap' were strongly linked to the set of embodied experiences which formed the negative poles of the binary oppositions (hard, heavy, noisy, faltering, disjointed), and correlated inferior visual and aural perceptions of athletic being. In both these categorisations, the felt experience of covering the running route was perceived to be saturated; in other words the sensory quality of such runs was total, either positively or negatively. These training sessions were then systematic in terms of their sensory experience. The third kind of practioner

construct defined sessions as ‘ok’. Thus, within these training periods there was an amalgamation of sensory experience which incorporated both positive and negative embodied sensations and similar visual/aural perceptions of the corporeal athletic self: a mixture of binary oppositions with no particular pattern of occurrence:

> A lot of runs are just ok, nothing special and nothing awful....Like today was quite mixed in terms of experience. During parts of the run my right hamstring was tight so it starts ‘talking’ to me, protesting. Parts of the run I never felt any problem, so it was quiet. Quads were heavy to start off with and eased and I even felt some drive in them later on. Other sessions you find it’s alright and then in the last mile you get some bit of you tweaking and moaning until the end. There’s a lot of change in the body and as you go on, you have little good patches and little bad patches until the session finishes. (Individual Log 2)

Experientially, the categorisation of ‘ok’ sessions was dependent upon an equilibrium (Dewey 1980) being maintained between periods of space and time deemed problematic and those considered unproblematic. If too many negative features manifested themselves for extended periods of the run, then the categorisation ‘ok’ was called into question. In addition the intensity of negative features needed to be low enough for positive features of the running to be experienced, otherwise a similar re-categorisation would occur:

> When things are wrong like when you have a nagging Achilles (tendon) problem, it spoils everything. You might get around the session but the pulling of the tendon is so loud it blanks out everything else positive about your body. Lots of runs though the low level of physical grumbling is not loud enough to do that. Last night I was a bit achy particularly in the glutes, but that was intermittent up

> the slopes, and there were bits of flat where I managed to pick the pace up and enjoy the session. (Individual Log 1)

Categorisation was then emergent in that a definition of the situation was assembled as ground was covered and the route ensued. This definition or categorisation was also contingent, being dependent upon the emergence of the various kinds of sensory based intelligence previously depicted. The categorisation was also steeped in relativity, as whilst judgements were based on immediate sensory indicators, memories of previous good and bad going were also used as another ongoing evaluative resource (Pink 2009, p.37) in the here and now. Moreover, categorisation was found to be fluctuating and characterised by a degree of tentativeness, particularly during 'ok' sessions in which difficult and better periods of running were intertwined. Interestingly these properties of emergence, contingency, relativity and tentativeness are those posited by McHugh (1968) in his classic study of how people define situations in social interaction generally. Ultimately the data pointed to the last couple of miles of sensory experience being heavily influential in the process of defining final categorisation. So that if 'bad patches' had been successfully negotiated earlier in the run and the athletes had emerged into 'good patches' then final categorisation tended to be positive. The reverse tended to be the case when positive periods were followed by negative ones.

Whilst there is a scientific basis for conditioning athletes to distance race effectively and that basis is exemplified by training schedules featuring progressive loading of aerobic and anaerobic efforts , how individuals experience particular sessions always contains an element of chance. There is then within distance running training (and racing) the perennial presence of serendipity, for the experience always contains this element of aesthetic adventure which runs into the unknown of embodiment. One may be able to complete the kind of training session one wants, but the crux of the matter is

how one completes it, with relative ease or not. There is enough discomfort in distance running at the best of times and the result is that runners normally start each training session with an optimistic hope of relative ease occurring, (albeit their experience tells them there is no absolute guarantee of this happening, regardless of what their performance has been at their previous training session).

Distance running training and racing experiences are usually recorded in logs or diaries. The entries offer the details of training schedules along with accounts of the actual embodied experience of each session, which include categorisations of the kind previously depicted and which also portray how the 'going' has been in some depth. Through this process of documentation sessions come to exist outside of direct sensory experience, and the logs also act as a resource for invoking embodied memories of past runs. Moreover, training logs are also a resource which can be analytically scrutinised by athletes, a scrutiny which allows them to evaluate and amend the organization of their overall training programme over a period of weeks, months, or years if need be:

So to present one example, the following log entry identifies a problem which threatened the author's capacity to train:

> This morning's session was plagued by my Achilles tendons which have been sending me little warning messages when getting up in the morning for a while. It has now became 'pulling' on the run. What a drag I don't want this it's the absolute bane of distance runners! (Individual Log 1).

The above kind of problematic episodes are defined within pragmatist theory as 'crises' which 'can threaten the continuity and coherence of the embodied subject' (Shilling, 2008, p.18). The response of the author in collaboration with his female

training partner was to examine their logs for the previous two weeks. A process which subsequently correlated the Achilles problem with the use of training routes which all featured a long portion of a particular canal path. The path being very boggy for long sections of it. Sections in which it was thought Achilles tendons tended to get overstretched. A decision was then made not to use that section of canal and subsequently within a week the author's tendon problem had disappeared**.** In pragmatist terms this kind of modification of running sessions serves as an instance of 'creativity... actions that alter certain aspects of oneself and/or one's surroundings in order to repair or enhance one's embodied capacities for action' (Shilling, 2008, p.19).

Conclusion

As Shilling (2008, p.162) has stated, the pragmatist works of Mead, Dewey and James provide a framework of conceptual insights which are useful for the analysis of embodied action emanating 'from the *dynamic interactions* and *transactions* that occur between the external and internal environments' of subjects. Shilling (2008, p.162) also notes that these 'environments vary in their significance, but these variations are something to be *explored* rather than assumed'. This paper has explored such a variation using the particular insights of habituated action (2008, p.13), sensory work (2008, p.10), crises and creativity (2008, pp.18-19). It has theorised a case of athletic activity in which embodied knowledge is used to enhance routine training, a mundane process upon which participation in the formal social order of sport (routine races, championship races) is founded. There is much theorisation about the social order of sport at both organisational and structural levels, but presently that theorisation is all too often disconnected from the

embodied sense making of participants, making that connection constitutes a sociological challenge that has yet to be met.

In addition, the stock of embodied knowledge portrayed by veteran runners, in particular the five binary oppositions, constitutes a possible useful pedagogic template which could be formally used by coaches to orientate their novice athletes towards a practical reflexive monitoring of their habitual embodied 'going'. An awareness which in turn could help guard against injury and aid performance in the pragmatist tradition of *creative action*.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to tender his thanks to Dr Jacquelyn Allen Collinson who collected the data with him and to Harry Cowen for his helpful comments.

References

Allen Collinson, J. 2005. Emotions, Interaction and the Injured Sporting Body. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 40 (2), 221-240.

Allen Collinson, J. and Hockey, J. 2011. Feeling the Way: Notes towards a haptic phenomenology of distance running and scuba diving. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46 (3), 330-345.

Allen Collinson, J. and Hockey, J. 2005. Autoethnography: self indulgence or rigorous Methodology?. *In*: M.J. McNamee, ed. *Philosophy and the Sciences of Exercise, Health and Sport: Critical Perspectives on Research Methods*. London: Routledge, 187-202.

Atkinson, P. and Delamont, S. 2006. Rescuing narrative from qualitative research. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16 (1), 164-172.

Benson, D. and Hughes, J.A. 1983. *The Perspective of Ethnomethodology*. London:

Longman.

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Brekhus, W. 2000. A Mundane Manifesto. *Journal of Mundane Behaviour, 1 (1) , 1-14. ww.mundanebehaviour.org/issues/v1n1/brekhus.htm*

Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory.* London: Sage.

Crossley, N. 2006. In the Gym: Motives, Meaning and Moral Careers. *Body and Society*, 12 (3), 23-50.

Csordas, T.J. 1993. Somatic Modes of Attention. *Cultural Anthropology*, 8 (2), 135-156.

Dewey, J. 1980. *Art as Experience*. London: Perigee.

Downey, G. 2005. *Learning Capoeira*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Feld, S.. 1996. Waterfalls of song: an acoustemology of place resounding in Bsavi, Papua New Guinea. *In:* S. Field and K. Basso, eds. *Senses of place*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 91-136.

Felski, R. 1999-2000. The invention of everyday life. *New Formations*, 39 (Winter) 15-31.

Fehr, M. 1987. Of Bodies and Technologies *In:* H. Foster, ed. *Discussions in Contemporary Culture No 1. Dia Art Foundation*. Seattle: Seattle Bay Press, 159-165.

Giddens, A. 1984. The Constitution of Society. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Garfinkel, H. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*, London: Sage.

Goodridge, J. 1999. *Rhythm and Timing of Movement in Performance*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

Griggs, G. 2009. ‘When a ball dreams, it dreams it’s a Frisbee’: the emergence of

aesthetic appreciation within Ultimate Frisbee. *Sport in Society*, 12 (10), 1317-1326.

Haapala, A. 2005. On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place. *In*: A. Light and J.M. Smith eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 39-55.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. 2007. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Hockey, J. 2005. Injured Distance Runners: A Case of Identity Work as Self Help. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 22 (1) 38-58.

Hockey, J. and Allen Collinson, J. 2007. Grasping the Phenomenology of Sporting Bodies. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 42 (2), 115-131.

Inglis, D. and Hughson, J. 2000. The Beautiful Game and the Proto-Aesthetics of the Everyday. *Cultural Values*, 4 (3), 279-297.

Ingold, T. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.

Leddy, T. 2005. The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics, *In:* A. Light and J.M. Smith, eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, New York: Columbia University Press, 3-22,

Leder, D. 1990. *The Absent Body*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levi Strauss, C. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. New York: Beacon Press.

Lynch, M. 2001. Ethnomethodology and the logic of practice, *In: T.R. Schatzki., K. Knorr Cetina, and E. Von Savigny, eds. The Practice Turn in Contemporary Social Theory, London: Routledge, 131-148.*

Lyon, M. 1997. The Material Body, Social Processes and Emotion: 'Techniques of the Body' Revisited. *Body & Society*, 3 (1), 83-101.

Maivorsdotter, N. and Lundvall, S. 2009. Aesthetic experience as an aspect of embodied learning: stories from physical education student teachers. *Sport, Education and Society,* 14 (3), 265-279.

McHugh, P. 1968. *Defining the Situation*. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Paterson, M. 2007.*The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies*. Oxford: Berg.

Pink, S. 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography* , London: Sage.

Runciman, W.G. ed, 1978. *Max Weber*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scott, D. 2008. *The Art & Aesthetics of Boxing*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.

Shilling, C. 2008. *Changing Bodies: Habit, Crisis and Creativity*. London: Sage.

Sparkes, A. 2009. Ethnography and the Senses: Challenges and Possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Sport & Exercise,* 1 (1), 21-35.

Stacey, M. 1990. *The Sociology of Health and Healing*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Stranger, M. 1999. The Aesthetics of Risk: A study of Surfing. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 34 (3), 265-276.

Sudnow, D. 1972. Temporal Parameters of Interpersonal Observation. *In*: D. Sudnow, ed. *Studies in Social Interaction*. New York: Free Press, 259-279.

Tiles, J.E. .1990. *Dewey*. London: Routledge.

Tuan, Y. 1993. *Passing Strange and Wonderful*. Washington, DC: Island Press/Shearwater.