The fight game remembered...
The ethnographic-self as a sense making resource while researching professional boxers

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Abstract

Drawing upon my experiences conducting insider ethnographic research among professional boxers in and around London, England, over a five year period, in this paper I discuss the complex and often arduous methodological challenges entailed in getting to understand what to do with and ultimately harness, in epistemologically productive ways, one’s own subjectivity. In the spirit of a methodological confession my discussion explores the centrality of cultural memory, and of the body's role in its creation and dissemination, as I sought to make sociological sense of my own and other boxing-practitioners desire to take part in what is often a brutal sporting practice. Having undertaken this ethnographic journey, I assert that by making bodily ‘sense’ of, acknowledging and ultimately accounting for the multiple and often ‘forgotten’ layers of boxing reality gained from having invested much time and ambition as a performer in the ‘theatre with blood’ (competitive amateur and professional boxing) it is possible to view the ethnographic-self as a valuable resource through which to investigate cultural practices.