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# A Typology of Martial Arts Scholar–Practitioners: Types, Transitions, and Tensions in Capoeira

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**Abstract:** Martial arts are concerned with continuous technical practice and refinement over a lifetime, while scholarship is ordinarily undertaken by active learners and experienced (occasionally veteran) practitioners. These martial arts scholar–practitioners tend to be positioned according to specific types, from a more distant (and sometimes critical) scholar with less combat acumen to an instructor keen to read and engage in collaborative research. This article introduces a typology of ten martial arts scholar–practitioner types: (1) Supportive Scholar; (2) Former Practitioner; (3) Practitioner on Stand-by; (4) Immersed Apprentice; (5) Budding Scholar–Practitioner; (6) Established Scholar–Practitioner; (7) Temporary Practitioner–Researcher; (8) Experimental Leader; (9) Inquisitive Teacher; and (10) Curious Practitioner. The types are examined using Capoeira, one of the most academically studied martial arts. Drawing on the *Spannungsfeld*—the "field of tension" between science and practice—we reveal the specific strengths and limitations of each type while illustrating the common transition between positions across a career or research project. Finally, we consider some practical solutions to mitigate the relative weaknesses and oversights of the specific types, including the ability to form teams of scholar–practitioners from different positions in academia and martial arts. We close with suggestions for empirical research to test and refine our methodological model.

**Keywords:** Capoeira; ethnography; martial arts studies; positionality; Spannungsfeld; field of tension; typology; reflexivity; co-production; expertise



**Citation:** Islas, D.S.C.; Jennings, G. A Typology of Martial Arts Scholar–Practitioners: Types, Transitions, and Tensions in Capoeira. *Societies* **2023**, *13*, 214. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13100214

Academic Editors: David Brown and Robyn Jones

Received: 27 August 2023
Revised: 16 September 2023
Accepted: 18 September 2023
Published: 25 September 2023



## 1. Early Inspiration for the Model: The 2017 Martial Arts Studies Conference

With the other large table fully occupied in the atmospheric Indian restaurant, four of us delegates sat in a smaller, separate table, enabling a deep conversation about our martial arts backgrounds, research interests, and professional trajectories. Next to George was a female Choy Lay Fut Kung Fu practitioner in her mid-forties based in London who had admitted to having trained in the park next to the conference venue yesterday evening. Having brought an array of Kung Fu weapons with her on the train, she remained very much what we might call a martial artist, an exponent or a practitioner, and she attended the martial arts studies events out of curiosity. The lack of official backing from an academic institution made the conferences a little expensive for her as an unemployed person, but she brought fire and passion to the conversations about her martial art and the politics of her lineage. She was not writing anything in terms of research on her beloved style of Kung Fu, but she was open to reading and blogging about it. Opposite her was a male instructor of another style of southern Chinese martial arts, Wing Chun, who was also from the UK. In his late thirties, this instructor was already a senior lecturer at a teaching-intensive, post-1992 university—institutions often dominated by experienced practitioners of professions now returning to academia—and the man was midway through his PhD, which adopted a psychological perspective on coach feedback in Wing Chun. He had trained in two main lineages of Wing Chun—Ip Man (Leung Ting) and a rare village style—and he was now

developing his own hybrid style in his hometown while visiting his new teacher in Hong Kong wherever possible. He attends martial arts research events when he can, getting hands-on with interactive exercises and debates, although at the time, he had yet to publish his work. Next to him was an older scholar in his early fifties from Hong Kong who was an established professor of cultural studies. Despite being of Chinese extraction, this professor was actually a practitioner of Japanese Kendo. Unlike the other two diners, the professor admitted that he was not actively training due to him being in a "crazy writing mode". His work was on martial arts cinema, and we talked at length about the methods used in film studies when compared with the approach taken by television scholars. Meanwhile, George was still a keen practitioner of Wing Chun Kung Fu who became a social science researcher thanks to their interest in martial arts cultures, pedagogies, and philosophies (often studies through ethnographic apprenticeships in this and other arts). George had been an instructor during his PhD, but with the moves for academic job opportunities, he now occupied a more scholarly territory, moving away from the business and politics of leading a group and from studying with his teacher on a regular basis. Little did he know that following that point, he was moving from Wing Chun to a new study on Taijiquan and historical European martial arts (HEMA)—making him a practitioner–researcher of a different kind.

## 2. Martial Artists as Practitioners and Scholars

The above vignette is a short tale of an academic and social encounter in the summer of 2017 between four different kinds of martial arts scholar–practitioners. Indeed, there tend to be different types of martial artists engaging in research and various forms of researchers engaging in martial arts, but very often, this entails an overlap: What has become known as the scholar–practitioner examined in this special edited collection on Sport, Physical Culture, and Education. We can first breakdown the notion of the practitioner, which differs to how the term is used elsewhere, as in "a sport psychology practitioner" [1,2] or "a sport coaching practitioner" [3]. Martial artists often refer to themselves as practitioners because of the fact that they are chiefly concerned with practicing their evolving skill sets towards the endless goal of technical mastery. The wider practices might include solo form sequences, standing postures, shadowboxing, and sparring, with micro practices unique to a style or school being the specific techniques of the body that act as the basis of the art in question. A given martial artist might drill punches at the beginning of a class, while later working on their footwork or swordplay at home or in a local park (as mentioned in the vignette above). Through our various studies on various fighting systems [4,5], we have observed that some martial artists devote their time to a lifestyle of practice—training with friends on the weekends, their classmates in the evenings, and on their own within their home or work environments. All of martial arts demand continuous practice of such skills in order to develop a recognized level to then be able to teach, and it is worth noting that martial arts teachers and instructors are almost exclusively active practitioners. This contrasts with many modern Western sports in which the coach is typically a retired athlete or player who can no longer practice their sport due to age, injury, or the rules around eligibility for competition and training [6]. Boxing is a typical example of this in the closely related field of combat sports, with coaches often being former boxers who cannot continue with the sport due to the strenuous nature of pugilism and the risks that accompany it (as in concussion and the associated early-onset dementia), whereas the narratives of ageing surrounding the teacher in many Asian martial arts is one around continued practice and the refinement of skill into old age [7].

Martial artists are sometimes interested in research, with some consuming research through open-access, specialist journals such as *Martial Arts Studies*, *Ido Movement for Culture: Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology, Archives of Budo, Journal of Martial Arts Research, Wushu Science*, and *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas* (formerly the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*). Some practitioners with the financial means even go out their way to purchase expensive monographs and articles from less accessible outlets, while many now listen to

martial arts podcasts, including those run by researchers and leaders of academic networks (as in Paul Bowman's extensive Martial Arts Studies Podcast series). There is enough access to research to allow it to inform martial arts pedagogies and communities, and some practitioners—as seen above—also venture into universities to engage with the latest scholarship and ideas. Moreover, as the said scholars seek out participants for their research, the practitioners will inevitably become gatekeepers and informants, especially for the ethnographic fieldwork that has become a dominant mode of research. In some cases, the practices of martial artists become scholarly ones—seeking out academic literature, reviewing it in depth, writing about it, and perhaps even engaging in some kind of research of one's own.

Studies on Capoeira—the Afro-Brazilian martial art in which dance, fight, and play converge—are an interesting case for finding, analyzing, and describing different types of scholar–practitioners. That is due, first, to the constancy with which Capoeira has been studied in the academic environment, with the first publications in the English-speaking world dating back to the 1940s [8]. Furthermore, since the 1990s, there has been a significant increase in academic publications on Capoeira and a broadening of the range of disciplines and topics. While earlier research focused primarily on the history and technique of Capoeira [8–10] or devoted to the biography of prominent *Mestres* (masters) [11], more recent studies have explored its social, political, and cultural dimensions [12–15]. Scholars from various disciplines, including anthropology [16], sociology [17], musicology [18], and dance studies [19], have generated new insights into Capoeira's practice and meaning. While Brazilian scholars continue to produce a significant amount of research on Capoeira, with most of it focusing on Capoeira in Brazil, there is also an increasing number of studies conducted by scholars in Europe and North America and a growing interest in researching Capoeira outside Brazil [20–25]. Finally, most researchers studying Capoeira since the 1990s are scholar–practitioners or became scholar–practitioners while they studied it [25–27]. For the above reasons, and the familiarity David has developed in this field during his Ph.D. on the pedagogy of this art in his native Mexico, we have decided to take Capoeira researchers to illustrate a possible typology of scholar–practitioners.

Several articles in this edited collection have focused on theoretical aspects of being a general scholar–practitioner within specific fields of practical and scholarly activity. Taking a slightly different approach, this article contributes to this special collection on the Scholar–Practitioner in Sport, Physical Culture, and Education by considering the broad issue of being a scholar–practitioner in martial arts. We identify that there is no single form of scholar–practitioner in martial arts and its related practices, but rather, a multitude of possible types that one can move across (and work with) during the course of one's career. Our typology is mainly developed with the empirical social sciences (anthropology, ethnography, sociology and cultural, critical, and social psychology) in mind, although it might have implications for scholar–practitioners from the humanities (cultural studies, film studies, history, and philosophy being notable examples in martial arts studies), as well as the natural sciences (biomechanics, nutrition, sport performance analysis, etc.). We perceive this as two authors who work within a philosophy and education department (David) and a school of sport and health sciences (George). We have actually transitioned across the sciences, with David moving from the discipline of biology to the philosophy of education, and George specializing in the sociology of sport after his broader foundation in exercise and sport sciences. Our colleagues and students are invariably budding practitioners, active practitioners, or former practitioners of education and sport and leisure pursuits, as in former schoolteachers and athletes turned sport coaches.

This article is written with social scientists who are actively involved in the study of something they practice. These social scientists, such as sociologists, are chiefly concerned with examining the complex realities within society, which often involves developing new, highly specific theories and categorization systems (as in typologies) on topics such as social class and social stratification. This paper therefore adds to our understanding of martial arts and martial arts studies by considering the types of people who both practice

and research them. Whereas colleagues in humanities and natural sciences might not be expected to reflect on their positioning, and might even be discouraged from revealing details on their backgrounds, collaborations and trajectories (especially in experimental, laboratory-based research), and reflexive statements are now the norm in the social sciences. This is especially true in qualitative research and ethnography in particular, where reflexive position statements are now expected with editors, reviewers, and readers of published work.

Moreover, navigating the literature and the physical field of martial arts can be challenging—especially for the novice researcher embarking on their first social science empirical project in which they will need to be overtly reflective on their positioning, as in their dissertation methods section. A typology of scholar–practitioners can make these novice and more experienced researchers make sense of their positioning in terms of both academic and martial arts development while assisting them in making decisions about the kinds of other scholar–practitioners that might be advantageous to work with in collaborative projects. Finally, the typology can help to identify the limitations of each type of scholar–practitioner, as each position comes with specific strengths and weaknesses (see Table 1 and the later discussion in Sections 6 and 7). Overall, the typology should assist researchers in making sense of their internal transitions across scholar–practitioner types over time while enabling them to envisage working with other types in collaborative research endeavors.

**Table 1.** Name, description, and example of the ten types of Scholar–Practitioners in our typology. The ten types have been organized in a descending order, from those closest to the "pure" scholar to those closest to a "pure" practitioner. Thus, each line represents a different position in the field of tension.

| Name | Description | Example (Capoeira) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Supportive Scholar | Professional scholars who investigate a practice as participant observers and, while doing so, are embraced by the community of practice and become marginal practitioners. | Sara Delamont |
| Former Practitioner | Professional scholars who research a martial art they practiced in the past. They may or may not still be involved with the community of practice. | Neil Stephens |
| Practitioner on Stand-By | Professional scholars who research a martial art that they have stopped practicing because of personal or professional issues but intend to reassume. | - |
| Immersed Apprentice | Professional scholars (or people pursuing an academic career) who become practitioners expressly for research purposes, in the style of Loïc Wacquant. | Lauren Miller |
| Budding Scholar–Practitioner | Regular practitioners who do not (yet) have a position of power in their communities of practice and who become Scholar–Practitioners during their professional careers. | David Contreras Islas |
| Established Scholar–Practitioner | Regular practitioners who have simultaneously established themselves in academia and research their practices on a regular basis. | Lívia Pasqua |
| Temporary Practitioner–Researcher | Regular practitioners with no research purposes or intentions to become professional scholars who become Scholar–Practitioners for a short period (e.g., to obtain an academic degree). | Katharina Aichroth |
| Experimental Leader | Professional practitioners who hold a leadership position in their communities of practice and, in parallel, research their practice as scholars | Rosângela Araújo (Mestra Janja) |
| Inquisitive Teacher | Professional practitioners who hold a leadership position in their communities and occasionally reflect on practice in an academic tone without aspiring to an academic career | Bira Almeida (Mestre Acordeon) |
| Curious Practitioner | Non-professional practitioners interested in academic martial arts research | - |

Although about martial arts and Capoeira in particular, this typology of scholar–practitioners is likely to be of interest to scholar–practitioners of other physical cultures, professions, and pursuits. Its value might rest in its applicability in methodological writings,

confessional tales, and conference presentations in a range of disciplines, sub-disciplines, and fields beyond the likes of sociology, the sociology of sport, and martial arts studies.

After a brief survey of the scholar–practitioner concept in the literature (3), we will give an (incomplete) overview of the diversity of specific scholar–practitioners active in martial arts studies in general and Capoeira studies in particular (4). This overview highlights the possibility and the need to generate a typology to better understand the different positions from which these scholar–practitioners have approached the practice under study. Next, we present the method and theoretical foundations from which we elaborate our typology (5). Finally, using the example of Capoeira, we will describe the ten types that make up our typology by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of each (6) and discuss how a person might undergo the transition across some of these types during their sometimes streamlined yet often-unplanned martial arts and academic careers (7). We close with some recommendations for future research into this model and its application for budding and established scholar–practitioners alike (8).

## 3. The Scholar–Practitioner in Education, Sport, and Physical Culture

There are numerous terms for people who teach, research, and practice a particular thing: practitioner–researcher, scientist–practitioner, practitioner–scholar, and pracademic. Pracademics, for instance, can be regarded as "someone who is *both* an academic *and* an active practitioner in their subject area" [28] (p. 8). Bailey [29] provides an accessible introduction to the slightly different notion of the scholar–practitioner:

> The "scholar" half of the same individual is consumed by a desire to understand and uncover the very best way(s) to accomplish the task. Importantly, what the scholar-practitioner actually does is found at the hyphen that joins the two words, where the two aspects are guided by theory and theory is tempered by actions [29] (p. 50).

The concept of the scholar–practitioner has been utilized by a range of academic commentators for the last four decades. Menges [30] was one of the first to discuss the term by considering that a wide variety of people might act as scholar–practitioners: "All of us try to make sense of our experiences and the experiences of others. We experiment with alternative conceptualizations; we make predictions and seek evidence to support or refute those predictions" (pp. 51–52). However, Menges [30] highlights the tensions between the different sides of the bridged term: "All scholar-practitioners feel tensions between these roles. Pressure to be productive scholars may reduce attention to teaching. The immediate demands of teaching may rob time from scholarship" (p. 51).

Since that time, a great deal of writing on the scholar–practitioner has been conducted within the realm of education—most notably in educational leadership, as seen in the journal *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*. Mullen [31] regards the scholar–practitioner leader in schools and universities as one type of scholar–practitioner "whose engagement in such leadership activity as evaluation, self-reflection, research and application is aimed at improving schools" (p. 13). Indeed, they note that "there is no one way to be a scholar-practitioner or to perform this role, as the hues vary from credible researcher, to activity, to change agent" (p. 12). The scholar–practitioner is often considered in highly favorable terms. For instance, more recently, Bailey [29] claims that the scholar–practitioner leader "operates reflexively in the boundaries between theory and practice; striving to create examples of democracy and social justice within schools while simultaneously meeting modern accountability demands" (p. 47).

Although "schools" in the research above are normally conceived of in terms of traditional schools for educating children, martial arts schools might be incorporated within this bracket—especially with schoolteachers who also work as martial arts coaches and instructors. In sport, Collins and Collins [28] advocate the place of scholar–practitioners of adventure education and outdoor learning, especially in regard to the unification of theory and practice:

> Undoubtedly, theory serves as a foundation to practice but practice and application should also serve as the catalyst to derive theory. Thus, good theory informs the education of coaches and leaders, while practice exposes practical challenges requiring a structural research intervention and identifies inappropriately developed theory (p. 2).

For Collins and Collins [28], such a strategy would avoid the gulf between evidence-based practice and belief-based practice—something they note using the metaphor of a ravine. Indeed, some of the research into the practitioner–researcher utilizes specific metaphors to help explain the complex process of identity formation and change, as in the metaphor of a pracademic in a revolving door through which pracademics make their transitions between academia and practice—a transition that includes tensions such as imposter syndrome and the potential loss of previously held practitioner identities [32]. For scholar–practitioners beginning in universities, the journey might begin with the co-creation between the learner (the budding researcher) and the supervisor [33], or that of the intellectual handyman who "are pragmatists, concerned about consequences and bricoleurs, able to utilize a multitude of methods to achieve the best consequences. They constantly rely on theory to guide their practice and use their experience gained through practice to develop new theories" [30] (p. 57). Some of these theories are likely to be based on critical reflection and critical theory, as opposed to positivistic notions of science [34].

Within yoga studies, Singleton and Larios [35] show the value of examining the large number of scholar–practitioners:

> The category of scholar-practitioner can helps reflect on the identity, beliefs, agendas, and disciplinary convictions of these scholars [. . .] It can help us to reflect on what constitutes scholarship and what does not, insofar as it is seen to lie beyond the bounds of academic orthopraxis [35] (p. 37).

Questions raised by these scholars include the status of writers of non-peer reviewed material and authors who do not cite reputable sources, and those who move between evidence-based research and faith/community practice. Interestingly, Singleton and Larios [35] note that many yoga scholars do not come from cultures that traditionally practiced yoga, i.e., those of South Asian heritage. They also observe historical trends indicating scholars acting as secret practitioners or scholars living double lives. Based on a survey with the authors of book chapters within the same handbook, the authors came to the conclusion that:

> In discussion varieties of scholar-practitioners, we are well aware that such categories are merely ideal-typical and may not describe one particular 'scholar-practitioner' of yoga. Scholar practitioners may straddle two or more categories. They may occupy more than one position over the course of their lives and careers, moving from example from a serious daily yoga practice to no practice at all, or vice versa [35] (p. 41).

The above quotation from Singleton and Larios [35] announce a series of problems that must be considered for elaborating a typology. Namely (a) that the types of scholar–practitioners described will necessarily be ideal types, which do not necessarily correspond to the experience or biography of the particular scholar–practitioners; (b) that the types are not static, but that the same individual may embody different types of scholar–practitioners throughout their life; and (c) that any typology should be considered unfinished and perfectible, to be open to accommodate new types of scholar–practitioners that emerge over time (e.g., with the emergence of new trends in research methods).

## 4. Notable Martial Arts Scholar–Practitioners

The field of martial arts studies—as it is now referred to as—has been founded and led by scholars–practitioners operating in and across various academic and martial arts disciplines. Pioneering (and still widely cited) work from the likes of Phillip Zarrilli on South Indian Kalarippayattu [36] and Loïc Wacquant in the South Side Chicago boxing

milieu [37] helped spearhead an approach to becoming a martial arts novice and later apprentice gurukkal/fighter learning a specific martial arts system, culture, and pedagogy via an immersive ethnographic design. Some of those scholars continued to practice until their death, as in the late American theatre studies professor Phillip Zarrilli's case of blending Keralan Kalarippayattu with Wu style Taijiquan and hatha yoga in his actor training retreats in rural West Wales (United Kingdom). Some longstanding scholar–practitioners of East Asian martial arts developed early (and often overlooked) collections from the perspectives of anthropology [38] and philosophy [39]. The British anthropologist DS Farrer continued this trend with his numerous ethnographies of arts such as Malaysian Silat and its links to Sufi mysticism [40], which was aided—especially in terms of physicality—by his solid background in Chinese martial arts such as Chow Gar Praying Mantis Kung Fu. Farrer and John Whalen-Bridge [41] were actually the first to coin the term "martial arts studies". Later, the then Taijiquan exponent (and contributor to that edited book), Paul Bowman [42], set up a discussion on how martial arts disrupts academic disciplinary boundaries, from history to cultural studies and from anthropology to political sciences. This has led to the creation of the Martial Arts Studies Research Network with its corresponding journal *Martial Arts Studies*, podcast, and annual conferences. Such a network adds to the longstanding JORRESCAM group in the French-speaking world, which has just held its 21st international conference, as well as the well-established IMACSS conference normally running between Poland and the Iberian peninsula.

Most of the academic journals mentioned earlier are edited by experienced martial artists who have also worked as instructors of specific systems. Spanish sport science scholar Carlos Gutierrez is a black belt in Judo and Polish sociologist Wojciech Cynarksi runs his own school of Idokan Karate and Jiujitsu in Poland that gives the name Ido to his journal—a place where much work on these arts is featured [43]. Other scholars such as Wing Chun devotee Ben Judkins (through his Chinese Martial Arts Studies/Kung Fu Tea website) have already developed accessible blogs read by martial arts practitioners who are outside academia. There are such sub-fields within martial art studies, with historical European martial arts studies being a case in point. This HEMA research is almost exclusively led by active practitioners and instructors of medieval and Renaissance fighting arts—most notably fencing and wrestling. Daniel Jaquet [44] is a good example of this in academia, while Guy Windsor [45] is an example of a scholarly practitioner operating outside the university setting. Some scholar–practitioners in countries such as China even work in university departments dedicated to the examination of martial arts such as Wushu—although, in the process, this perhaps excludes studies on the martial arts of other cultures. Their background as practitioners gives them a sense of experiential authority within a highly embodied, combative, and political field of influence and knowledge. New generations of scholar–practitioners have emerged, with interests in specific topics such as gender and violence. What unites these scholar–practitioners is a concern for continued practice in one or more martial arts (and perhaps a transition across styles over time), and the constant study of those arts. Alex Channon, for instance, has transitioned from Hung Kuen Kung Fu and kickboxing [46] to Brazilian Jiujitsu following inspiration from one of his research participants, while his frequent co-author Christopher Matthews has continued to engage in some form of boxing training and concern for timely and important topics such as concussion [47], although his amateur fighting career is now over. These are practitioners of combat sports interested in the combat sport side of martial activities [48], as opposed to those embedded in the sub-field of what is often understood as "traditional martial arts".

It is important to highlight the fact as with yoga studies that these aforementioned martial arts scholar–practitioners are typically male, and more often than not, white Westerners. In recent years, more writing has come from female researchers such as dance scholar and Jeet Kune Do practitioner Janet O'Shea [49], adding to the earlier work from established names such as cultural studies figure and boxing enthusiast Meaghan Morris, who has written about Bruce Lee and many other topics [50]. Another renowned figure is

veteran ethnographer Sara Delamont, who is an interesting case of a non-practitioner of the martial aspects of Capoeira and Savate despite her extensive writings on these systems and their pedagogies [51]. Also included in this list of notable female martial arts scholars are Kath Woodward [52], known for her work on boxing and Anna Kavoura [53], and Catherine Phipps [54], noted for their work on combat sports.

A similar picture is found in the Capoeira field, with the oldest research in the area being done mainly by male scholar–practitioners. The works of Waldeloir Rego [10], Edison Carneiro [55], Frederico Abreu [56], and Jair Moura [57] are obligatory references to Capoeira research in Brazil, particularly concerning Capoeira history. In the English-speaking world, works by Lowell Lewis [16], Matthias Assunção [58], and Greg Downey [26] are considered classics in the literature on the subject, respectively, in the fields of anthropology, history, and sociology. In more recent years, however, this ever-growing field has been enriched by the contributions of female scholars such as Lauren Griffith [21,23], Janelle Joseph [22,59,60], Menara Lube Guizardi [61,62], and, in the Portuguese-speaking world, Christine Zonzon [63], Cristina Rosa [19], Livia Pasqua [64], and Rosângela Costa Araújo, better known as Mestra Janja [65,66]. In the English-speaking world, moreover, there have been fruitful collaborations between non-practitioner scholars, scholar–practitioners, and Capoeira Mestres, as is the case of the extensive work of Sara Delamont, Neil Stephens, and Claudio Campos [20]. Many of these scholars work and study at reputed Western institutions such as Cardiff University, Texas A & M, the University of London, and the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, which illustrates the growing prestige that martial arts studies is being afforded.

The example of Capoeira studies illustrates the diversity of the scholar–practitioner community, not only in terms of the academic disciplines to which they belong but their ethnic origins, their gender, and their position in the tension between academia and practice. Each of the dimensions mentioned above (discipline, ethnicity, gender, and position in the field of tension) are crucial to the scholar–practitioners' research experience. All of these could be employed to develop a typology highlighting the challenges, obstacles, and opportunities that individual scholar–practitioners encounter when researching a specific practice. However, the typology we develop in this article refers exclusively to the last dimension: the scholar–practitioner's position in the tension between academia and practice. By this "position," we mean the different ways in which scholar–practitioners relate to their role as scholars, to their role as practitioners, and to the dash that connects the two. This position has significant consequences for the research process, both epistemically and ethically, and even for the risks and health of the researchers. For example, the research experience of an immersed apprentice like Greg Downey, who learned Capoeira expressly for research purposes, can be expected to differ from the experience of a researching Capoeira expert, as in the case of Rosângela Costa Araújo (better known as *Mestra* Janja). Nevertheless, this dimension, more than the others, has yet to be explored in the literature. Finally, it is important to state that when we refer to academia and scholars, we are mainly considering modern Western(ized) notions of research and scholarship within a university and official institutional settings involving academic writing conventions.

## 5. Methodological and Theoretical Approach

Our methodological and theoretical approach takes heed of Menges's [30] words: "This intellectual work is usual shared with others only through its results: articles, training materials and so on. Seldom do we share descriptions of the processes which give birth to those products" (p. 52). We have already shown how some authors view the issue of being a scholar–practitioner through the guise of specific metaphors. Finlay [67] considers reflexivity in terms of the metaphor of a swamp that is, quite obviously, hard to navigate and easy to get lost in. She articulates this conundrum below:

> On their own journey, they [researchers] can all too easily gall into the mire of the infinite regress of excessive self analysis and deconstructions as the expense of focusing on the research participants and developing understanding. Reflex-

> ive analysis is always problematic. Assuming it is even possible to pin down something of our intersubjective understandings, these are invariably difficult to unfold, while confessing to methodological inadequacies can be uncomfortable [67] (p. 212).

In her own form of typology, Finlay [67] posited five variants of reflexivity: (1) Introspection; (2) intersubjective reflection; (3) mutual collaboration; (4) social critique, and (5) discursive deconstruction. These forms can be considered in light of the development of our own typology of scholar–practitioners:

(1) *Introspection:* The typology began with introspection into our own experiences as scholar–practitioners who have encountered numerous kinds of scholar–practitioners, as in the encounter that George detailed in the opening vignette.
(2) *Intersubjective reflection:* David and George came together on several occasions (in person and online) in order to come to an agreement around the exact terms to use for each practitioner–researcher, which were first detailed in a table and created in a shared file. This table then expanded to include the advantages and disadvantages of each type, as seen in Appendix A.
(3) *Mutual collaboration:* We continued to collaborate by writing different parts of the article and reading different areas of academic literature, such as on Capoeira for David and the scholar–practitioner for George.
(4) *Social critique:* We were able to gain feedback from the editors of this special collection, which drove the revision of the abstract to forge a new typology of scholar–practitioners. Moreover, the 2023 Martial Arts Studies conference enabled us to gain wider feedback from scholar–practitioners who started to identify themselves in terms of the different types shown in our PowerPoint presentation visuals. Suggestions and comments were made by notable scholar–practitioners around the themes of ableism and age.
(5) *Discursive deconstruction:* We have not used any overt approach to deconstruction in a poststructuralist fashion, although we have continued to revise the terms for each type according to grammatical rules (e.g., changing practitioner in stand-by to practitioner on stand-by). As the next step is the collection of empirical data on scholar–practitioners, we anticipate the discursive revisions according to the actual terms that the scholar–practitioners in our sample actually use in their own discourse.

More specifically, the idea of developing a typology of martial arts scholar–practitioners originated from a joint meeting in spring 2022 with the Qualitative Research Methods and Social Theory (QRMST) research group at Cardiff Metropolitan University. David and George then met in the summer of 2022 to discuss the potential to use Capoeira as an example within martial arts studies, a field saturated with scholar–practitioners. Drafts of the proposal were developed in the autumn of 2022 before feedback from the editors, enabling us to reconfigure our article into a working typology. David had a brief research stay at Cardiff Metropolitan University, enabling us to refine the model before presenting it at the 2023 Martial Arts Studies Conference at the University of Sheffield.

We have already established the centrality of practice to martial arts. Lorge [68] posits a key problem in the newly established field of martial arts studies:

> Currently, there is a fundamental split between those who practice martial arts and those who study it. Practitioners often do not see the value of studying martial arts, and many scholars do not think martial arts should be studied. Ultimately, the struggle to establish a field of research on martial arts must convince both practitioners and scholars that studying martial arts is valuable to both groups. At the moment, it is only individuals who both practice and study martial arts that bridge those two areas. This is, and likely will remain, a small group. For the field of martial arts studies to develop, it must expand beyond an idiosyncratic collection of practitioner-scholars [68] (pp. 904–905).

The phenomenon of the scholar–practitioner is striking, as it is rare for a martial arts scholar to not also be a seasoned practitioner. This contrasts with the field of sport studies, for instance, which has many former athletes and many fans, but not necessarily a high proportion of competitive sportspeople. In fact, George was once asked about the interesting case of martial arts being researched by practitioners in the Physical Activity Podcast—a discussion that stimulated the idea around this article.

Although Lorge's [69] main argument was around the need for practitioners to engage with research on their martial art (especially history for deconstructing myths and understanding the strategies and limitations of founders), he does acknowledge a two-directional benefit of joint practice and scholarship: "Study for the practitioner broadens one's perspective in perhaps the same way that practice broadens the perspective of someone who studies" [68] (p. 913). This study often begins with key definitions, which Lorge [69] acknowledges "tend to reflect the methodological position and personal background of the definer" (p. 905). Our own backgrounds are as a Mexican philosopher and Capoeira instructor based in Germany and as a British sociologist of sport and a practitioner of traditionalist Chinese martial arts based in Wales who share key interests in social theory and qualitative research methods. We initially planned to conduct some empirical research (namely through interviews) on notable scholar–practitioners via the case study of Capoeira, which is David's main martial art and the focus of his PhD research. However, as we started to map out potential participants from around the world, we ended up charting a series of ideal–typical scholar–practitioners, from a traditional scholar engaging in a little practice to a long-term martial arts instructor consuming published research and its more accessible formats. This led us to draw up a table of typologies, with their key characteristics as well as their advantages and tensions. The table formed the basis for our discussions, leading to a conference presentation at the Martial Arts Studies Conference in July 2023, which enabled us to refine our ideas to the present manuscript. In the future, we will return our attention to empirical explorations of the typologies via sampling, analysis, theory testing (and building), and focus group discussions.

In terms of theory, David's provided an inspiration from German scholarship. The metaphor of the field is often used for interdisciplinary areas of activity such as sport studies, leisure studies, and now martial arts studies. Another field metaphor less known in the Anglosphere is the *Spannungsfeld*—the "field of tension". The Spannungsfeld is a recurring metaphor in the German-speaking world, both in the scientific and everyday spheres. According to the digital dictionary of the German language (Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutsche Sprache), the word "Spannungsfeld" refers to an "area, which is the occasion for the development of opposing opinions, forces, disputes" [69]. Other dictionary entries define it as an "area with different and opposing forces acting on each other, influencing each other and thus creating a state that appears fraught with tension" [70]. The following components of this metaphor can be extracted from these definitions:

1. The field of tension is a spatial metaphor that refers to the image of an area or a plane. This image implies the possibility of locating, positioning, or even moving around the area.
2. The area of the field of tension unfolds as the effect of two opposing "forces". The nature of these "forces" is ambiguous. They may be opinions or disputes, methodological approaches, emotions, desires, or needs.
3. The tension of the field of tension is attributed to the action of these forces, which permeate all points within the field.
4. The tension is not uniform throughout the field. One of the forces will act with greater or lesser intensity on people or objects, depending on their position within the field.

The metaphor of the field of tension can be used to illustrate the situation of a single mother debating between spending more time with her children and working longer hours to support them, or that of an artist debating between giving free rein to her creative impulse and producing works commissioned by someone else. In the scientific sphere, it can illustrate the relationship between theory and empiricism, basic and applied research, and

science and practice [71]. It can also be used to capture the situation of scholar–practitioners negotiating between both roles during their research and practice experience.

Scholar–practitioners are torn between their commitments, their roles, and their passions for science and the practice of martial arts. In adopting the metaphor of the field of tension, we argue (like Menges [30]) that the roles of the scholar and the practitioner often tilt in different directions, so moving toward one necessarily implies moving away from the other. We further argue that such shifts are common throughout the careers and lives of many scholar–practitioners. Thus, navigating the field of tension between science and practice is an integral part of the experience of being a scholar–practitioner.

## 6. The Martial Arts Scholar–Practitioner Typology: The Example of Capoeira

We developed a typology with ten elements based on the professional biography of notable scholar–practitioners mainly (but not exclusively) from the field of Capoeira. We also derived the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges closely related to the position of each type in this field of tension between academia and practice. For the reader's convenience, we have summarized the complete typology in Table 1. An extended version of this tabular summary, including the advantages and disadvantages of each type, can be found in Appendix A of this paper. In what follows, we will briefly explain each of these types. Following the arrangement of the bridged term "scholar-practitioner", our order of exposition will gradually progress from those types closer to the scholar pole toward the positions closer to the practitioner.

The Supportive Scholar occupies the first position in our typology. Supportive Scholars typically investigate a practice as participant observers and supervisors of more physically active fieldworkers and, while doing so, are embraced by the community of practice and become marginal practitioners. It is important to note that this type of scholar–practitioner does not aspire to be a practitioner as such, which may be due to methodological reasons, time restraints, or other physical impediments. However, the course of their ethnographic work leads them to gradually become involved in the practice beyond mere observation, coming to be welcomed and appreciated as part of the community of practice. In this sense, they are involuntary practitioners. Sara Delamont is an example of a supportive scholar. Despite not actively participating in training, in the course of her research process, Sara has been welcomed by the Capoeira community, receiving a nickname (*doutora*/doctor) from the master, Claudio Campos (the "Achilles" character in her earlier publications)[1]. She has become involved in marginal but fundamental Capoeira practices such as singing and clapping at *rodas*—the famous circle involving singing, clapping, and chanting in unison to raise the *axe* (atmospheric vibe or energy) of the game of Capoeira.

Supportive scholars have the academic trajectory and scholarly know-how to design quality research projects yielding a range of publications. Their position enables some critical distance from the practice, which is convenient for analyzing sensitive issues such as gender, discrimination, and power relations. They can also use their experience to recruit, guide, and nurture new research talents. However, due to their marginal involvement with practicing, supportive scholars lack the depth and breadth of the embodied knowledge of regular practitioners. Thus, they may require many years of ethnographic work to understand the subtle and embodied meanings of the practice, particularly when it comes to the differences between styles and schools. As it is not part of their lifestyle, they might find it hard to commit to studying a martial art long-term—although this was not the case with Sara Delamont, who has been observing and writing about Capoeira in the United Kingdom since 2003.

The second position in our typology corresponds to a Former Practitioner. As the name implies, these professional scholars research a martial art they once practiced in the near or distant past. Their reasons for leaving the practice may be varied, ranging from professional, personal, and health reasons, including injury, chronic pain, disability, and aging. As Former Practitioners, they may or may not still be involved with the community of practice. When a scholar–practitioner steps away from the practice momentarily, intending to return—for

example, after recovering from an injury—we speak of a Practitioner on Stand-By. As they plan to resume, these scholar–practitioners can be expected to stay more in touch with the community of practice than Former Practitioners.

Both the Former Practitioner and the Practitioner on Stand-By have some advantages over the Supportive Scholar. First, they have experience as practitioners, which allows them to capture aspects that are difficult for the Supportive Scholar to access. Their contacts within the community of practice can give them access to various sources of information, such as documents and private social media from their former school or organization. At the same time, having distanced themselves from their communities of practice can help them adopt a more critical and objective perspective compared to scholar–practitioners that are more actively involved. Finally, having dedicated themselves to their academic careers, they might have the resources and experience to conduct quality research. On the other hand, their knowledge of the practice they are researching may need to be updated because of their remoteness. This is in part because martial arts styles are often updated with new approaches to performing movements and sequences. Similarly, if the Former Practitioner or the Practitioner on Stand-By does not have an adequate record of their experiences as practitioners, these may prove an unreliable, confusing, or outdated source of information. For example, they may recall their time as practitioners with nostalgia, homesickness, or other feelings that bias their perspective. Furthermore, their authority within the martial arts community might diminish as they slowly lose their physical prowess and skills.

An example of a Former Practitioner in Capoeira research is Neil Stephens, who has co-authored with Sara Delamont on numerous papers (see bibliography). Neil stopped practicing Capoeira in 2009 due to a career move away from the fieldwork site and into the realm of science and technology studies (STS); however, he continued to publish with Sara until at least 2021. We found no examples of a Practitioner on Stand-By in the world of Capoeira research. However, going back to the vignette at the beginning of this paper, the Kendo practitioner of Chinese origin who was in a "crazy writing mode" provides a clear example of a Practitioner on Stand-By.

Moving forward into the zone of practitioners, we find the Immersed Apprentice. Immersed Apprentices are people who become practitioners expressly for research purposes, for example, to study the learning process of a martial art or combat sport using embodied or carnal ethnography in the style of Loïc Wacquant. They can be professional scholars or people pursuing an academic career. Greg Downey [26] and Lauren Miller (formerly Lauren Griffith) [21,72] are prominent examples of Immersed Apprentices who have produced remarkable research from their experiences learning Capoeira in and outside of Brazil.

Immersed Apprentices can study what it is like to learn martial arts from scratch and become a practitioner from the beginning stances and steps—a research perspective that is hardly accessible for the types mentioned above. Furthermore, approaching the practice with explicit research purposes makes them less susceptible to bias due to the emotional ties to the practice community than subsequent types. However, becoming an Immersed Apprentice comes with new physical risks, such as injury, which could be frowned upon by ethics committees and university management overseeing the travel forms and risk assessments. Engaging with the dual role of practitioner–researcher also requires a great deal of energy throughout the day and into the evening, as with the physical and social engagement in far-flung weekend events, festivals, and the more regular post-training transcription of field notes. Starting with the status of "beginners", Immersed Apprentices may have difficulty gaining the trust and respect of the community of practice or grasping the symbolic dimensions of the practice. Particularly in the case of highly complex arts such as Capoeira, the work of the immersed apprentice may take many years for them to get to the level of an instructor able to experiment with teaching and learning strategies themselves.

The Budding Scholar–Practitioner occupies the following position in our typology. It refers to any regular practitioner who does not (yet) have a position of power in their community of practice and become Scholar–Practitioners aiming for a scientific career in

academia. A person like David, who has practiced Capoeira since their teenage years and then began researching Capoeira for a Ph.D. project, is an excellent example of a Budding Scholar–Practitioner. However notable Capoeira researchers like Sergio González Varela and Lívia Pasqua began their career as Budding Scholar–Practitioners as well.

As an established practitioner, the Budding Scholar can identify key themes and issues to research that are relevant not only to the academic world but also to the practice community. As early career researchers (ECRs), they will likely be respected and supported in both fields of academia and martial arts. Furthermore, their status as committed practice community members may grant them access to privileged knowledge about the field, which is difficult to obtain for the types mentioned earlier. As they are familiar with the practice, Budding Scholar–Practitioners are at a lower risk of injury than apprentice scholars, in part because they are accustomed to the physical demands of their discipline. Practicing can also be a way for them to reduce academic stress and maintain good health.

However, Budding Scholar–Practitioners might feel obligated to please their martial arts instructor or academic supervisor, limiting their autonomy and creativity. In addition, the research process can hinder the development of a practitioner (e.g., spending long hours sitting down to write a paper or dissertation also affects the physical condition of the practitioner, as in their mobility and flexibility). Vice versa, spending less time practicing can distract from the research process while draining one's energy reserves. Thus, the Budding Scholar–Practitioner's position implies a constant negotiation of their position in a field of tension—a process that can be exhausting.

After graduation, some Budding Scholar–Practitioners achieve a stable position in academia and remain active in their communities of practice. In this case, we are talking about Established Scholar–Practitioners. Brazilian capoeirista and researcher Lívia Pasqua and Mexican Sergio González Varela are good examples of this type. Lívia Pasqua (with Rosa & Bortoleto, 2023) [73] is a full-time professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where she coordinates the Research Group LABCAPO—Laboratory of Capoeira. Simultaneously she is an active member of the Abadá Capoeira Group. Sergio González Varela [15,17,25] is a professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Warsaw, Poland, and is a well-known practitioner of Capoeira Angola.

By holding a position as a researcher or university professor, Established Scholar–Practitioners have greater freedom than Budding Scholar–Practitioners to conduct research of interest to them. By staying active, they have access to the embodied experiences of practicing that elude Supportive Scholars. They are also at a lower risk of injury compared to Immersed Apprentices since they are accustomed to the type of training in the practices they research. Finally, as active members, they may have privileged access to knowledge from their communities of practice. On the other hand, pursuing an academic career may force Established Scholar–Practitioners to move away from the communities of practice they are most familiar with (e.g., by obtaining an academic position in another city or country). Also, maintaining a balance between academia and practice can be demanding within the cycles of teaching, marking, and special events requiring more emphasis on one of those two elements of the scholar–practitioner identity.

Sometimes, regular, devoted practitioners become scholar–practitioners temporarily without intending to make a career in the academic world. In this case, we speak of a Temporary Practitioner–Researcher. Such Temporary Practitioner–Researchers become Scholar–Practitioners for a short period, e.g., to write a paper in the context of obtaining an academic degree. Unlike Budding Scholar–Practitioners, they see their time in academia as fleeting. Instead, they see the practice as something they want to cultivate for life. That is, they are more committed to their role as practitioners than to their role as scholars. While at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, David encountered a couple of bachelor's and master's students who decided to write their final papers on their beloved martial art of Capoeira. Some of these papers—especially the master's ones—appear published, as in the case of Katharina Aichroth [74] or Christian Köhler [75]. After this achievement,

these scholar–practitioners generally retire from academia while pursuing a career in other industries.

Temporary Practitioner–Researchers can sample the life of a researcher to produce a valuable product for other students and early career researchers to use as a template. The novelty of the research project could result in a high degree of enthusiasm. Like the Budding Scholar–Practitioner, they may have easy access to privileged knowledge from the community of practice. However, their research quality might be questioned, especially if it is an undergraduate or a master's dissertation. Furthermore, Temporary Practitioner–Researchers will probably have less autonomy than the typologies above, and they may feel obligated to please their masters and their communities of practice. Aichroth's book [75] (p. 7), for example, is dedicated to the Capoeira Angola community where she conducted research.

Moving further into the practice pole, we find the Experimental Leaders. In the field of Capoeira, Experimental Leaders usually appear as professional practitioners and fully-fledged masters (*Mestres* or *Mestras*) who hold a leadership position in their communities of practice and, in parallel, research their practice as scholars. Examples of this type of scholar–practitioner are Cinézio Feliciano Peçanha (Mestre Cobra Mansa) [76] and Rosângela Costa Araújo (Mestra Janja) [24], whose writings display their Capoeira nicknames as pennames. The former is the founder of the International Capoeira Angola Federation (FICA). The latter is the founder and director of the Nzinga group of Capoeira Angola. Both are recognized Capoeira Mestres, leading internationally renowned communities. On the academic side, Mestre Cobra Mansa holds a Ph.D. in Knowledge Dissemination from the Federal University of Bahia and, together with Matthias Assunção, has conducted historical research on the origins of Capoeira in Central Africa. Mestra Janja holds a Ph.D. in Education from the University of São Paulo and is currently a professor at the Department of Gender Studies and Feminism at the Universidade Federal da Bahia.

As Experimental Leaders, Janja and Cobra Mansa have access to a student cohort in their groups, schools, and broader associations, who are all likely to participate in their projects. This situation brings some advantages for research, for example, for students to be willing to answer surveys or be interviewed. This contrasts with the reality of many forms of research conducted by strangers who often find it difficult to gain a high response rather to questionnaires as well as cold calls and email communications. As recognized figures in the social field of practice, they can easily access all kinds of information. Not only do they have contact with other high-ranking practitioners, but they also have recognition and admiration. However, this position is accompanied by its respective disadvantages. For example, students may grow tired of the continual surveying and observation taking time from training or expecting them to complete tasks outside the classes. Power issues are also prominent, where some projects might be designed to praise the teacher's pedagogical approach or support their ideological and technical vision. Due to their position in the community of practice, the Experimental Leader's labor can significantly impact the transformation of the practice itself, thus altering both the object and the results of the study.

Next, occupying a position closer to the practitioner-pole, we have the Inquisitive Teacher. Inquisitive Teachers are professional practitioners who hold a leadership position in their communities and occasionally reflect on the practice in an academic tone without aspiring to an academic career. They often write and publish books, papers, and blog entries reflecting on their experiences in the practice and expounding their philosophy as practitioners in an essayistic manner. Due to their prominent position in the social field of practice, they are often invited to give lectures, participate in interviews, and even collaborate in documentaries. Moreover, their work tends to have a much higher visibility than that of other types of scholar–practitioners. Experimental Leaders also tend to be avid consumers of scientific and artistic productions related to their practice. Mestre Acordeon (Almeida) [11] and Mestre Nestor Capoeira [77] are examples of Inquisitive Teachers in Capoeira.

Inquisitive Teachers help spread new academic knowledge, often in open-access formats, and are an essential link between scholars and practitioners. They can stimulate discussions inside and outside their schools and even motivate other practitioners to become scholar–practitioners. Their openness and curiosity toward academic work make them fundamental links to the endeavor of other scholar–practitioners. However, as they do not produce what we (speaking from a western, European perspective) might regard as academic/scientific research themselves, Inquisitive Teachers might misunderstand the research that they consume and, due to positive and survivor bias, might only present positive results to their students to reinforce certain myths, stereotypes, and ideologies. As people who continued training, they are likely to dismiss negative findings from research—especially that which contrasts to their own solidified worldview.

Finally, the tenth type of our typology refers to people like the female Choy Lay Fut Kung Fu practitioner mentioned in the vignette at the beginning of the paper. We propose the name Curious Practitioner to design this type of non-professional practitioners, who are interested in academic martial arts research but do not (yet) produce research themselves. Since they do not conduct research, Curious Practitioners are not strictly scholar–practitioners. However, they are of great relevance to the work done by the other types. That is because they first consume and disseminate the knowledge produced in the academy. In addition, because of their research interest, they can act as informants for other types of scholar–practitioners or even facilitate their access to the communities of practice. Finally, they can help form and maintain collaborative networks among different types of scholar–practitioners and between scholar–practitioners and the members of the community of practice. One of the main disadvantages of Curious Practitioners is that they may need to invest their resources to pay for participation in conferences or access to specialized literature.

In the social sciences, beyond the all-important issue of positionality, theory is also a vital concern. Some scholar–practitioners along the Supportive Scholar end-typology continuum might be more inclined to read and employ external theories on culture, pedagogy, and society and even develop specific theories. Meanwhile, other scholar–practitioners—quite likely those Experimental Leaders and Inquisitive Teachers—are more likely to use theory in a more passive sense, instead opting for emic concepts disseminated through martial arts culture and the pedagogy in question, as in the concepts that drive their practice such as *axé* (life force or energy driving a class, often linked to music and singing) and *malícia* (the deception/trickery needed to succeed in one-to-one combat) in Capoeira. The types on the far side of the practitioner end of the continuum (e.g., Inquisitive Teacher, Experimental Leader, or Temporary Practitioner–Researcher) might be able to write non-academic articles and books. Still, they might need the assistance and involvement of those on the scholar end of the spectrum to conduct and publish academic research in peer-reviewed sources (e.g., Supportive Scholar, Immersed Apprentice, or Established Scholar–Practitioner). These and other dynamics of collaboration between the different types are discussed in detail in the following section.

## 7. Discussion: Typology Dynamics within the Field of Tension

The description of the types in the previous section may give the reader an impression of permanence or immobility. That is not our intention, nor would it be faithful to the day-to-day experience of scholar–practitioners. On the contrary, we emphasize that the relationships between the types we have presented are complex and dynamic. Sometimes, the same individual simultaneously embodies two or more types in different research projects. On occasions, the said person moves from one type to another for personal or professional reasons. Still, during other moments, different types of scholar–practitioners set sail together to navigate the field of tension as a team. This section will delve into these dynamics.

First, there is a horizontal dynamic between types. Horizontal refers to the fact that one scholar–practitioner may move between types throughout their academic career or life as a practitioner. For example, Neil Stephens began as an Immersed Apprentice of Capoeira in 2003. Due to changes in his professional situation and other health issues such

as injuries, Neil quit Capoeira in 2009. However, he continued to collaborate and publish with Sara Delamont as a Former Practitioner. Another example is the case of David, who became a Budding Scholar Practitioner upon starting his Ph.D. in 2020. During the process, however, he has been nominated to obtain the rank of Contramestre (an assistant *Mestre*)[2] in his Capoeira community, whereby his position in the tension field could soon shift to an Experimental Leader. However, before that happens, David might become a Practitioner on Stand-By for a short time during the final writing of his dissertation.

These and other shifts occur constantly in the experience of Scholar Practitioners researching a single practice. We have tried to condense these displacements in Figure 1. The double red arrows indicate that displacement between positions is possible between two directions, for example, between the Practitioner on Stand-By and the Immersed Apprentice. The single blue arrows indicate a unidirectional movement: for example, a Supportive Scholar can become an Immersed Apprentice, but he cannot become a Supportive Scholar again. In any case, he will become a Former Practitioner. Some of these horizontal relationships are possibilities for which we have not found concrete examples in the reviewed literature nor within the circle of our scholar–practitioner colleagues. For example, it is feasible for a Supportive Scholar captivated by the practice they are researching to become an Immersed Apprentice and even become an Experimental Leader over the years. We have not been able to find such a horizontal displacement within our own martial arts and scholar networks, but we remain open to these possibilities.

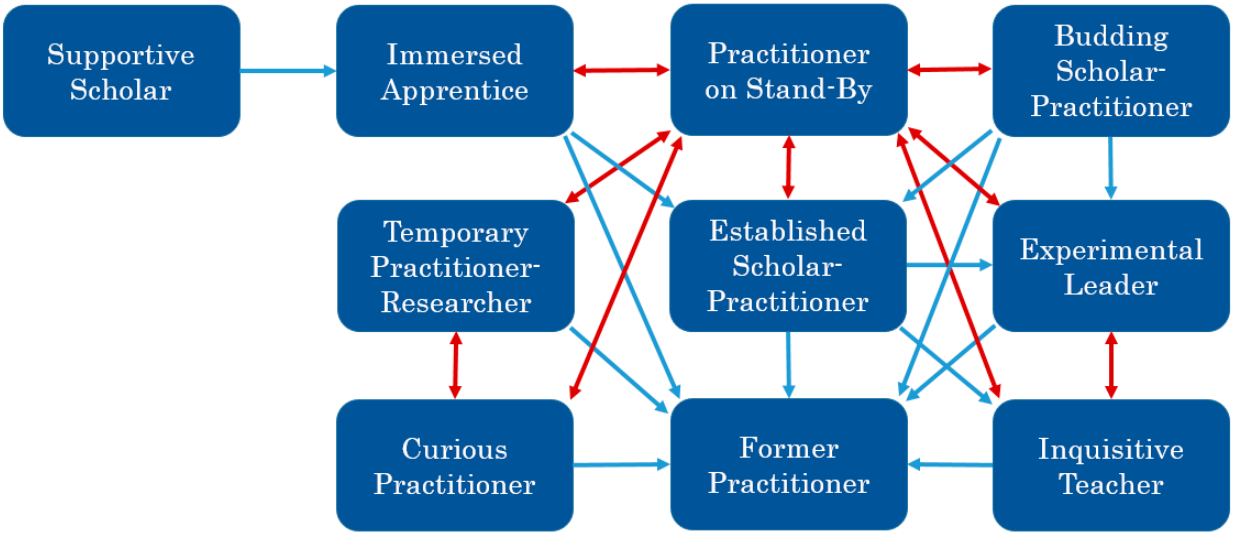


**Figure 1.** Horizontal relationships between the ten types of Scholar–Practitioners. Blue arrows indicate unidirectional or irreversible transitions. Red arrows indicate bidirectional or reversible transitions.

The horizontal relationships presented in Figure 1 refer only to the changes over time in the relation of a scholar–practitioner with a single practice. However, a scholar–practitioner researching two or more practices (as in two martial art styles or sports) may simultaneously occupy as many different positions in the field of tension as the practices they study. In this case, we speak of a transversal dynamic between types.

Transversal dynamics means that the same person can embody different types of scholar–practitioners when researching two or more practices simultaneously. For example, George is a Former Practitioner of Xilam (a Mexican martial art) and an Immersed Apprentice of historical European martial arts (HEMA) and Taijiquan. In addition, when he collaborates with David in his research on Capoeira, he positions himself as a Supportive Scholar. If we constructed a table ordering the types according to their position in the stress field for these three practices and connected them with lines to illustrate George's case, we would obtain a series of transversal lines. By using the expression "transversal" instead

of "vertical", we want to emphasize that the person (in this case, George) does not occupy exactly the same position in the different disciplines he practices/researches (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Transversal dynamics between types for the case of Author 2. The colored cells indicate Author 2's position in each of the disciplines he practices/researches.

| Practice | Types According to Their Position in the Field of Tension | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Xilam | Supportive Scholar | Former Practitioner | Immersed Apprentice |
| HEMA | Supportive Scholar | Former Practitioner | Immersed Apprentice |
| Taijiquan | Supportive Scholar | Former Practitioner | Immersed Apprentice |
| Capoeira | Supportive Scholar | Former Practitioner | Immersed Apprentice |

The collaboration between the two authors of this manuscript brings us to the third dynamic in the typology. Different types of scholar–practitioners can form networks of support and cooperation in pursuit of common interests. For example, an Inquisitive Teacher, motivated by curiosity, may open their school doors to a Supportive Scholar or an Immersed Apprentice.

These dynamics are very productive when different types of scholar–practitioners associate with each other to support their research processes or compensate for the disadvantages of their positions in the field of tension. An outstanding example of this form of collaboration is the ethnographic work of Sara Delamont, Neil Stephens, and Claudio Campos, who have worked together respectively as a Supportive Scholar, an Immersed Apprentice, and an Inquisitive Teacher, respectively, to research Capoeira in the UK [78–85].

In this case, Neil's embodied experience enriches Sara's participant observation. Sara, in turn, provides Neil with an outside perspective regarding her embodied experiences in Capoeira classes and events. This fruitful exchange is central to the method the authors call "two-handed ethnography" [77,81,86]. However, Sara and Neil's work was only possible with the support of Claudio Campos, the Inquisitive Teacher who opened the doors of his Capoeira school to them.

But Claudio's interest as an Inquisitive Teacher goes beyond welcoming researchers. It leads him to actively contribute to the research process: "Claudio taught the other two authors most of what they know about Capoeira. [...] Claudio is predominantly presented as a commentator: the voice of an expert, a Brazilian and a Capoeira insider as well as a central character in the academic text" [20] (p. 3). In this way, the two-handed, three-voiced group of researchers achieves a better balance within the field of tension.

The fruitful work of Delamont, Stephens, and Campos is proof that navigating the field of tension is better in the company of others. Forming supportive networks between different types of scholar–practitioners is a valuable strategy for navigating the challenges of individual positions and adding to their strengths and advantages. When navigating the tension field, it is best not to set sail alone.

## 8. Final Remarks

As a final exercise, let us return to the vignette in Section 1 and re-read it using the typology developed in this article as theoretical lenses. In doing so, we can recognize several types that we have presented in the four scholar–practitioners gathered at the table. The female Choy Lay Fut Kung Fu practitioner now appears as a Curious Practitioner who attends the conference motivated by personal interest. The male Wing Chun Kung Fu instructor is presented to us as an Established Scholar–Practitioner, with a firm foundation in both his academic career and his career as a martial artist. The older Kendo practitioner from Hong Kong is a clear example of a Practitioner on Stand-By who has longed to return to the dojo from which he has moved away for professional reasons. Finally, George, at that time, was transitioning from a Budding Scholar–Practitioner to an Established Scholar–Practitioner of Wing Chun. This exercise not only allows us to understand the position of each of these actors in the field of tension but also to anticipate some of the challenges, advantages, and disadvantages that they would indeed have in their respective

research/practice processes and even to glimpse the potential productivity of a hypothetical collaboration between them.

Enabling this type of exercise is one of the main objectives that motivated us to develop this typology. It aims to be a methodological tool to help the growing number of scholar–practitioners reflect on their position in the field of tension between academia and practice. Although initially conceived with martial arts scholar–practitioners and their growing field of martial arts studies in mind, its scope could be extended to other areas of academia where theory and practice are intertwined, such as in dance, yoga, and physical culture studies as well as sport studies, sport sciences, and of course education, where a lot of the early writings on the scholar–practitioner emerged.

When using the typology, however, it should be kept in mind that the process of developing it was based primarily on a speculative exercise supported, on the one hand, by a literature review of Capoeira studies and, on the other, by the experience of both authors. Therefore, some of the characteristics we have described for the types have no empirical support. That is the case of some horizontal dynamics, for which we have found no examples in the literature. Regarding this point, the question was raised about the different degrees of likelihood of horizontal displacement between types. Is this equally easy in all cases, or are there some cases in which it is easier or more difficult? The scheme presented in this article (see Figure 1) does not consider these variables, as we did not have the elements to analyze them. This lack of empirical basis and the focus on a specific group of scholar–practitioners (namely: Capoeira scholar–practitioners) constitute some of the main limitations of our results.

Another area for further exploration is the theme of the theory–practice binary that features in some of the literature on the scholar–practitioner, including articles on sports coaching and yoga in this special edition [87,88]. The ways in which martial arts scholar–practitioners use, test, and generate theory across the typology is an important consideration that would be aided by more in-depth empirical research utilizing documentary analysis in conjunction with interviews and focus groups to generate discussion and debate around the stress placed on theory and practice.

The aforementioned questions and limitations of our typology, however, could be addressed with an empirical basis. In this sense, the desideratum is to conduct empirical research that will make it possible to criticize, correct, or complete the typology and its dynamics. Such empirical research might include structured surveys or one-to-one interviews with a sample of scholar–practitioners engaging in martial arts journals, blogs, and conferences, as well as in-depth biographical interviews with notable writers and researchers of martial arts in order to understand their martial art journeys and professional trajectories. The typology presented in this paper can serve as a basis for sampling this type of empirical work, which could lead to another publication.

Confessional tales from ethnographers of martial arts and other arts might offer some autoethodological insight into their positioning and potential collaborations and teamwork across the types presented in our model. Overall, we hope this article stimulates the collection of data to test and refine our typology—not just in Capoeira, but also in other martial arts and physical cultures. However, it is important to take the advice of Finlay [67] (pp. 212–213) who reminds us, "as with any typology, the borders overlap and researchers may well employ several maps simultaneously".

**Author Contributions:** Both authors were involved in all aspects of the creation of this manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Typology of Scholar–Practitioners (Tabular Summary).

| Name | Description | Advantages | Disadvantages | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Supportive Scholar | Professional scholars who investigate a practice as participant observers and, while doing so, are embraced by the community of practice and become marginal practitioners. | They have the academic trajectory and scholarly know-how to design quality research projects yielding a range of publications. Their position enables some critical distance from those inside the practice, perhaps to examine issues such as ageism and ableism, and they could help to nurture new research talent. | These scholars lack the depth and breadth of embodied knowledge that the regular practitioners have. It might be difficult to discern differences between styles. As it is not part of their lifestyle, they might find it hard to commit to studying a martial art in the long-term. | Sara Delamont |
| The Former Practitioner | Professional scholars (or people pursuing an academic career) who research a martial art they practiced in the past. They may or may not still be involved with the community of practice. | Their experiences as practitioners allow them to capture aspects difficult for the Supportive Scholar to access. Their contacts within the practice community give them access to privileged information sources. They are likely to have the resources and experience to conduct quality research. Distancing themselves from their communities of practice can help objectivity. | Their knowledge of the practice they are researching may need to be updated. If they do not have an adequate record of their experiences as practitioners, these may prove an unreliable, confusing, or outdated sources of information. They may recall their time as practitioners with nostalgia, homesickness, or other feelings that bias their perspective. Their authority within the martial arts community might diminish as they slowly lose their physical prowess and skills. | Neil Stephens |
| The Practitioner on Stand-By | Professional scholars (or people pursuing an academic career) who research a martial art that they have stopped practicing because of personal or professional issues but intend to reassume. | Similar to the Former Practitioner. However, their contact with the practice community is likely to be closer, and their time out of practice is likely to be shorter. | Similar to the Former Practitioner. They may have missed the most recent events in the community of practice. | The Chinese Kendo practitioner in the vignette |
| The Immersed Apprentice | Professional scholars (or people pursuing an academic career) who become practitioners expressly for research purposes, in the style of Loïc Wacquant. | The researcher can study directly what it is like to learn the art from scratch and become a practitioner from the very beginning. By approaching the practice with clear research purposes, they are less susceptible to bias due to emotional ties to the practice community than subsequent types. | Their project comes with new physical risks such as injury, which could be frowned upon by ethics committees and university management. The dual role of practitionerresearcher requires a great deal of energy throughout the day and in the evening. Starting with the status of "beginners", they may have difficulty gaining the trust and respect of the community of practice, or gaining access to the symbolic dimensions of the practice. | Lauren Griffith |

**Table A1.** *Cont.*

| Name | Description | Advantages | Disadvantages | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Budding Scholar–Practitioner | Regular practitioners who do not (yet) have a position of power in their communities of practice and who become Scholar–Practitioners during their professional careers. | As established practitioners, they might be able to identify key themes and issues to research. As an early career researcher (ECR), they are likely to be respected in both academia and the martial arts. As members of the community of practice, they have access to privileged knowledge about the field that is difficult to obtain for the previous types. Practicing can help reduce the stress of academic work, as well as maintain good health. | They might feel an obligation to please their martial arts instructor or supervisor, thereby limiting their autonomy and creativity. The research process can hinder the development as a practitioner (e.g., spending long hours sitting down to write a paper or dissertation also affects the physical condition of the practitioner). Vice versa, spending too much time practicing can distract from the research process. They must constantly negotiate their position in this field of tension. | David Contreras |
| The Established Scholar–Practitioner | Regular practitioners who have simultaneously established themselves in academia and research their practices on a regular basis. | They have greater freedom than Budding Scholar–Practitioners to conduct research of interest to them. By staying active, they have access to the embodied experiences of practicing that elude Supportive Scholars. They are also at a lower risk of injury compared to Immersed Apprentices since they are accustomed to the type of training in the practices they research. Finally, as active members, they may have privileged access to knowledge from their communities of practice. | Pursuing an academic career may force them to move away from the communities of practice they are most familiar with (e.g., by obtaining an academic position in another city or country). Also, maintaining a balance between academia and practice can be demanding. | Lívia Pasqua |
| The Temporary Practitioner–Researcher | Regular practitioners with no research purposes or intentions to become professional scholars who become Scholar–Practitioners for a short period (e.g., to obtain an academic degree). | They can sample the life of a researcher to produce a useful product for other students and early career researchers to use as a template. The novelty of the research project could result in a high degree of enthusiasm. Like the Budding Scholar, they may have easy access to privileged knowledge from the community of practice. | The quality of the research might be called into question, especially if it is an undergraduate or a master's dissertation. The short period of time might lead to rushed research. The researcher will have less autonomy than the aforementioned types. | Katharina Aichroth |

**Table A1.** *Cont.*

| Name | Description | Advantages | Disadvantages | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Experimental Leader | Professional practitioners who hold a leadership position in their communities of practice and, in parallel, research their practice as scholars | The teacher–researcher has easy access to a student cohort in their class, school, and wider association who are all likely to participate in the project. Completion rates of surveys are bound to be high due to the students wishing to help their teacher. As a recognized figure in the social field of practice in general, they can have easy access to all kinds of information. | Students may grow tired of the continual surveying and observation taking time from training or expecting them to complete tasks outside the classes. Power issues are also obvious, while some projects might be designed to praise the teacher's own pedagogical approach. Due to their position in the community of practice, their intervention as a researcher can promote the transformation of the practice. | Rosángela Araújo (Mestra Janja) |
| The Inquisitive Teacher | Professional practitioners who hold a leadership position in their communities and occasionally reflect on their practice in an academic tone without aspiring to an academic career | Spreading new academic knowledge, often in open-access formats, can enhance the class and offer debate on different types. It could stimulate discussions outside the class, as in online forums. | They might misunderstand the research and even only present positive results to their students to reinforce certain myths, stereotypes, and ideologies, due to positive bias. | Bira Almeida (Mestre Acordeon) |
| The Interested Practitioner | Non-professional practitioners interested in academic martial arts research | They consume and disseminate the knowledge produced in the academy, can act as informants for other types of scholar–practitioners, or even facilitate their access to communities of practice, and help form and maintain collaborative networks between scholar–practitioners and members of the community of practice. | They may need to invest their own resources to pay for participation in conferences or access to specialized literature. | The female Choy Lay Fut practitioner in the vignette |

## Notes

[1] In the Capoeira style practiced by Claudio Campos, the nickname signifies belonging to the community. Practitioners of this style of Capoeira generally receive their nickname during the first year of practice, along with their first belt, in a ceremony known as *batizado* (baptism). The fact that Sara received this nickname is a sign that the community has embraced her as a researcher and a *capoeirista* (Capoeira practitioner).

[2] Capoeira groups are generally led by a *Mestre* (master). *Mestre* is the highest rank to which a *capoeirista* can aspire and has even been considered the ultimate marker of legitimacy within the social field of this practice [21]. A *Contramestre* (quartermaster) is a rank immediately below *Mestre*. A *Contramestre* can assume the functions of the *Mestre* in their absence.

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