

Toward a psychology of Jiu-jitsu: phenomenological analysis of the ways to combat in practitioner's experience

Victor Leal BASSETTI^{*1}, Thabata Castelo Branco TELLES², & Cristiano Roque Antunes BARREIRA³

¹ Universidade de São Paulo (EEFERP) (Brazil)

² Universidade de São Paulo (FFCLRP) (Brazil)

³ Universidade de São Paulo (FFCLRP/EEFERP) (Brazil)

5th IMACSSS World Scientific Congress Abstracts, Rio Maior (Portugal), October 6-8

Section: Psychological, pedagogic and didactics in MA&CS

Type: Oral communication

1. Introduction

A psychological perspective of martial arts necessarily involves the understanding of personal development sought for them. Such a development, much associated with martial arts virtues, outdistances the aggressive and violent uncontrolled behavior. Theebom (2012) review shows that the literature regarding the definition of the psychological effects of martial arts is inconclusive. In one hand, it points to the increased violence by practitioners, on the other, for greater control of aggression. The diagnosis of the authors is that the inconclusive results come from problems in the procedural design of such research to examine these phenomena. While external research perspectives seek correlations between objective data, internal perspectives seek to understand the determinants psychological phenomena to the objectification of aggression and violence and to control them. Prioritizing this inside look, this work focuses on the psychological phenomena that act on violence and aggression inserted in the forms of the combat. It was used for this purpose a phenomenological description of essential combative forms whose contours were previously investigated (Barreira, 2013): the struggle (street fight), the fight and combat play. The objective of this research is to identify and understand, through first-person accounts, how the experiences of Jiu-jitsu practitioners occur in the psychological transition among these different combative forms. This research is part of a series of projects that study these transitions, which assumes that the investigated phenomena are not identical in different martial arts. This paper aims to research these combative forms in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (BJJ) - martial art that seeks the domination of an opponent using immobilizations, chokes and "locks" applied to the joints of the opponent. There is a little awareness in the passages between the psychological boundaries that, in their experiences, support the fight on one side and on the other presses for violent combat. The results differ from all previous ones in the project mentioned before by the *contensive* nature of this martial art. These phenomena explanation can favor an educational and interventional acting, respectively in Physical Education and Sport Psychology, fostering behaviors less prone to violence among the practitioners.

2. Methodology

The sample was composed by adult BBJ fighters, with more than 5 years of experience. They must have participated in a competition at least once. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these practitioners, asking them: (1) how is the combat experience, (2) if there is any time when the fight becomes playful, (3) if he ever struggled (street fight), (4) if he has already fought for an affair of honor. The analysis of the interviews was made through a phenomenological method, consisting of a record and transcription for analysis, performing the phenomenological reduction and intentional cross between the reports, following the description made by Barreira and Ranieri (2013). Later these results are discussed, comparing with previously outcomes and with the studies

* Email: victor.bassetti@usp.br

found in combat sports area. This discussion is important to comprehend this experience according to an internal vision and the understanding of the practitioner (Giorgi & Sousa, 2010).

3. Results

Intentional crossing, because of empirical-phenomenological reduction, shows that BBJ fighting experience is characterized by improving the search for the opponent infighting immobilization, experienced as a reciprocal challenge. There is an agreed goal of the subjects in which both see themselves as risk and opportunity of simultaneously being attacked and attack, have defended the attacks and defending themselves from attacks. The presence of these elements highlights the body facets, teleological, motivational and inter-subjective in the experiential structure to fight BBJ. The 'default' is a first transition that leads to experience the fight with a characteristic of recklessness in the fight control. The intensification of the body force comes along with the intersubjective modification: the opponent tends to stop being seen as a range of risks, becoming emotionally felt as a threat; the opportunity gives rise to the feeling of needing to attack. Reciprocity is lost and, although there can be no deliberate intent to hurt, it diminishes the carefulness in not hurting the opponent, a process that is consumed in their reification. In the opposite direction, the 'smooth' is the result of the transition to the experience of playful fight. Force and psychical determination of the challenge lose intensity. Some risks are taken intentionally, allowing the partner to experience opportunities and defenses in situations that would be unlikely and avoided in a real fight. In this combat shape, the playful aspect of stress relief favors experimentation and learning, being characteristic of opponents with significantly different levels of mastery of the BBJ.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Given the inconclusive results regarding the psychological effects of martial arts (Theeboom, 2012), this work suggests that phenomenological perspective can be an alternative to understand the source and foundations of uncontrolled behavior, aggressive and violent fighting on experiences. Therefore, this intentional analysis is not a theoretical and abstract design, but a qualitative distinction that aims to apprehend the experiences that work day-to-day to the practitioners, enabling the BBJ fighting itself to happen. There is a multiplicity of combative experiences, that although resemble in some aspects, they differ from each other in a decisive way to the practice and in parallel to the development of the practitioner as a BBJ fighter. The results achieved are similar to Melo and Barreira (2015) in their analysis of Capoeira; and to Barreira (2013), in his phenomenological analysis of combat and martial arts. Nevertheless, it was noted some specificities of BBJ to be better investigated: there seems to be an association between self-control and the motor dynamics of the gentle art. The knowledge of the studied phenomena can favor more conscious interventions by teachers and experienced practitioners of martial arts in order to promote the development of beginners and themselves.

References

- Barreira, C. R. A. (2013). *L'essence Du combat: une approche phénoménologique des arts martiaux ets ports de combat dans sa dimension éthique*. In F. Heuser, A. Touboul, & A. Terrisse, A. (Orgs.). *Éthique, Sport de Combat & Arts Martiaux* (pp. 277-292). Toulouse: Presses de l'Université de Toulouse, 1 Capitole.
- Barreira, C. R. A., & Ranieri, L. P. (2013). *Aplicação de contribuições de Edith Stein à sistematização de pesquisa fenomenológica em psicologia: a entrevista como fonte de acesso às vivências*. In M. Mahfoud & M. Massimi (Orgs.). *Edith Stein e a psicologia: teoria e pesquisa* (pp. 449-466). Belo Horizonte: Artesã.
- Giorgi, A., & Sousa, D. (2010). *Método Fenomenológico de Investigação em Psicologia*. Lisboa: Fim de Século.
- Melo, F., & Barreira, C.R.A. (2015). *Psychological barriers between violence, fight and game: phenomenological transitions in the practice of capoeira*. *Movimento*, 21(1), 125-138.
- Theeboom, M. (2012). *A closer look at effects of martial arts involvement among youth*. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 11, 193-205.

Key words: Violence; martial arts; combat sports; BBJ; Brazilian Jiu-jitsu; Jiu-jitsu.

Study supported by the "Programa Unificado de Bolsas de Estudo para Estudantes de Graduação" from São Paulo University (USP) 2015-2016.

