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Acquiring Mastery: An Autoethnographic Case Study on Self-Directed Skill Attainment in Competitive eSports

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Abstract

While it is difficult to find and persuade research participants to invest the famous 10,000 hours of practice necessary to develop expertise in any given task, one can more easily commit oneself to such a devoted undertaking. Through autoethnographic observation, the author, a retired semi-professional eSports competitor with no experience or knowledge of the new competitive eSport game Street Fighter 6, documented and livestreamed months of gameplay sessions as he acquired expertise and rose through the ranks of the game's competitive online mode, striving to reach the game's highest ranking of "Master." The author critically examines the strategies and practices most useful for optimizing learning and performance – illustrating the contributions of reflexivity and reflection that are often overlooked in laboratory experimentation. Overall, this work demonstrates how autoethnographic insights developed "in the streets," when combined with empirical research in the lab, contribute to a fuller picture of learning and expertise.