

## How to Apply Somaesthetics? Practices, Methods, and Research Design in Somaesthetic Approach

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**Abstract:** *In this article, I address the field of somaesthetics from the perspective of a researcher and pedagogue. I propose ways to apply the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions of somaesthetics in the academic context. I also consider what defines a somaesthetic inquiry, how we could construct our research designs and evaluate our methods, and why it is essential to articulate somaesthetic knowledge in an accessible and credible way. I reflect on these questions with reference to the texts by philosopher Richard Shusterman and soma design researcher Kristina Höök. The article aims to illuminate the main characteristics of somaesthetics and outline some possible methodological directions, especially for researchers, pedagogues, developers, artists, and students who wish to conduct their somaesthetic inquiries in academia.*

The use of various embodied practices, such as yoga, taiji, and pilates, has increased considerably in Western daily life over the past few decades. In 2021, over 34 million people in the U.S. participated in yoga, while the market size of yoga and pilates studios within the wellness industry was estimated at 9.9 billion U.S. dollars (Statista Research Department, 2023). Such practices, originating both from the Eastern hemisphere and developed in Western countries, have become integral to our leisure time, self-awareness, and overall well-being. In numerous professions like education, the arts, and therapy, embodiment is employed as a tool, and the awareness of embodied well-being has become common knowledge, extending even to seemingly “incorporeal” tasks, such as typical office work.

Given the growing importance of embodied practices, it is not surprising that researchers from various disciplines are increasingly exploring the multifaceted aspects of embodiment. Embodiment has been a subject of discussion in philosophy, humanities, and social sciences for quite some time, while the physical well-being of the body has been a longstanding focus in medical sciences. While the former disciplines have explored embodiment from various experiential and socio-cultural perspectives, the latter still predominantly rely on a narrower view of the body as an anatomical and physiological object. However, some changes are

underway. In clinical research, for example, qualitative approaches are gaining an appreciation for offering a non-reductionistic view of illnesses and understanding people's experiences more deeply and humanely (Bhangu et al., 2023, pp. 1–2). The humanities and social sciences, where embodiment has previously tended to remain at the discursive level (Chadwick, 2017, p. 7), have also excelled in developing specific embodied approaches and methodologies (e.g., Chadwick, 2017; Ellington, 2017; Perry & Medina, 2015; Pink, 2015; Sandelowski, 2002).

To understand human embodiment and related well-being, we need to grasp our corporeal situationality in a specific time, place, and socio-cultural setting — and identify the myriad dynamic factors that relationally influence us. For such work, the field of somaesthetics proposed by philosopher Richard Shusterman offers an appropriate approach (Shusterman, 1999; 2008; 2012). But what exactly is somaesthetics, and more importantly, how is it practically applied? What methods could be employed, and should this approach serve as a philosophical, empirical-scientific, artistic, or well-being-oriented entry point to embodiment?

Shusterman has developed somaesthetics from the perspectives of a philosopher and a Feldenkrais practitioner. In this article, I will approach this field as an academic scholar and well-being educator. I have applied the somaesthetic framework in my empirical ethnomusicological research on human vocality and in my role as a pedagogue, developing the Voicefulness® method (see, e.g., Tarvainen 2018a; 2018b; 2024 forthcoming; n.d.). Here, I will highlight some research-related issues, focusing particularly on questions about research design and methodology that have surfaced while applying the somaesthetic approach. When referring to *research design*, I am addressing the overall structure of the inquiry—theoretical framework, concepts, methods, and more—enabling the collected or produced embodied evidence to respond to the research questions, problems, or aims (cf. Punch & Oancea 2014, p. 144). I aim for this reflection to offer an addition to Shusterman's perspectives to facilitate other academic researchers in using somaesthetics. My intention here is not to set out rules for structuring and conducting the somaesthetic process but rather to open up diverse perspectives for consideration in this regard.

Shusterman urges philosophers and researchers to harness their embodiment more deliberately and systematically in their reasoning. Understanding humanity tangibly, beyond quantitative facts or rational-logical pondering, necessitates finding a locus of reasoning within one's own body. (Shusterman, 1997, p. 175) Just as philosophers and scientists can benefit from conducting their work with the awareness of their own embodiment, so can the developers, educators, and hands-on practitioners of embodied methods gain from somaesthetics' analytical and culturally sensitive perspectives. While we increasingly use embodied practices and methods in our daily lives, we still may overlook their underlying premises—the ontological truths and cultural, embodied, and aesthetic norms they represent. This might not pose a problem for occasional practitioners, but teaching, developing, and researching these practices demand, in my view, a deeper understanding of their cultural, social, religious, political, and historical principles.

Somaesthetics has proven successful in arts research, encompassing music and dance, as well as in artistic research and design. This is not surprising since this approach provides an excellent framework for critically examining, developing, and implementing practical embodied methods, skills, and pedagogies related to aesthetics. As the title "somaesthetics" implies, this field includes comprehending and nurturing the aesthetic dimensions of human embodied experiences (Shusterman, 1999; 2008; 2012). It encourages drawing from one's own embodied knowledge, predominantly employing a first-person perspective. However, could it be that somaesthetics' emphasis on firsthand embodied practice and experience is seen as alien to disciplines based on

more traditional empirical data? While applications relying on larger numbers of participants have been limited so far, I suggest that somaesthetics could effectively explore this kind of data as well. Moreover, I would see Shusterman's somaesthetics as a good fit for the toolbox of academics, like anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists, as this approach is theoretically rooted in the philosophies of Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Ludwig Wittgenstein, William James, and John Dewey, to name a few (Shusterman, 2008). As a philosophical approach rather than a fixed theoretical or methodological model, somaesthetics also allows flexibility in conducting interdisciplinary research and applying various methodological solutions (Shusterman, 1999, p. 299). Nevertheless, it provides a clear theoretical framework and structure for research—be it theoretical, philosophical, empirical, or practical.

Somaesthetics is embraced by a diverse community comprising philosophers, researchers, artists, pedagogues, and practitioners of embodied methods. While this article primarily addresses individuals in academia, I aim not to confine the discussion solely to academics. Instead, I refer to these practitioners under a broader term: *somaesthetician*. I envision a somaesthetician as someone actively engaging in embodied methods to cultivate body consciousness and skills, utilizing their lifetime-acquired embodied sensibility to practically engage with their somaesthetic investigations. This engagement leads to the production of embodied insights, reflections, knowledge, and understanding. In the same vein, acknowledging that somaesthetic investigations extend beyond academic research, I prefer using the term *inquiry*, aligning with the approach advocated by Shusterman (2012, p. 26).

In this article, I draw on Shusterman's and Kristina Höök's writings as a starting point for my thoughts on the somaesthetic methodology. Shusterman has established the foundational concepts of somaesthetics, while Höök, a pioneer in soma design, has applied this approach rigorously, articulating somaesthetic knowledge in detail. Both thinkers have guided my earlier explorations of somaesthetic experiences and inspired me to draw on my embodied and pedagogical work to inform academic research — and vice versa. This article aims to further expand the discourse on somaesthetics from a theoretical standpoint to its empirical applications. It reflects how somaesthetic practices and methods could be framed and articulated, especially within academic research. It seeks transparency regarding the aims, roles, uses, and evaluation of a somaesthetic inquiry. The questions addressed are: A. What are the potential aims, objects, perspectives, methods, data, and theoretical frameworks for a somaesthetic inquiry? B. What methods could be applied in the analytic, pragmatic, and practical scopes of somaesthetic inquiry? C. How and by what criteria could the application of methods be evaluated in somaesthetic inquiry? D. How do we articulate somaesthetic knowledge? It should be obvious that the scope of one article cannot thoroughly cover this vast subject; rather, it sketches some outlines aiming to offer insights for those considering the somaesthetic path in their inquiries.

I address the questions raised above in subsections 2.—4. of this article. However, in the first subsection, titled “Embodied, Somatic, and Somaesthetic Practices and Methods,” I discuss the need for a clearer exposition of the concepts related to embodied, somatic, and somaesthetic practices and methods. Moving on to the second part, “What Makes a Somaesthetic Inquiry?” I contemplate the essence of inquiries falling under the category of “somaesthetic,” outlining prospective elements for research designs, including potential aims, objectives, perspectives, methods, data collection, as well as theoretical and philosophical frameworks. In the subsequent subsection, “Methods in Analytic, Pragmatic, and Practical Somaesthetics,” I present Shusterman's concepts of analytic, pragmatic, and practical somaesthetics. These serve as a

sturdy foundation for any somaesthetic inquiry, with the first providing a methodological basis for analytic reflection, the second for developing embodied practices and methods, and the last for nurturing somaesthetic sensitivity through one's embodied work. I illustrate this with examples from previous academic studies where somaesthetics have been effectively applied in constructing research designs from aims to outcomes.

Moving forward to the fourth part, "Evaluating Methodological Positions," I present perspectives on critically evaluating one's research process and methodological choices. This evaluation is crucial for a somaesthician who navigates various ways of knowing, from one's embodied intuition to analytical argumentation. In the subsequent subsection, "Articulating Somaesthetic Knowledge," I address a recurring question in prior studies of embodied experience: how to express embodied knowledge in words without losing its richness yet keeping it understandable even to those unaccustomed to argumentation derived from corporeal thinking. Here, I draw particularly on the ideas of Shusterman and Höök and their emphasis on the necessity for a knowledge canon and a more cohesive conceptual framework in the field of somaesthetics. Finally, in the concluding section titled "Conclusions," I briefly summarize the main points raised in the article regarding the application of somaesthetics in an academic environment.

## **1. Embodied, Somatic, and Somaesthetic Practices and Methods**

Somaesthetics is a critical and ameliorative approach that focuses on the experience and use of the soma (body-mind as an inseparable whole), particularly from the perspective of aesthetic perception and creative self-improvement (Shusterman, 1999, p. 302). The emphasis lies on embodied practices and methods. However, for individuals entering the field, it may initially be unclear whether these methods serve as means or objects of development in somaesthetic investigations such as research, artistic projects, or pedagogical work. Somaesthetics has indeed faced criticism for its lack of clarity in methodological implementations, especially in areas where empirical methods are crucial (Bardzell, 2014, p. 10). Likewise, potential confusion may arise from overlapping concepts referring to various practices as "embodied," "somatic," or "somaesthetic" alongside broader concepts like "practice," "method," and "technique." This might also lead to a question about where the "research method" fits into this context. It is crucial to emphasize that while consistent usage of concepts might benefit the field of somaesthetics and embodiment studies, it might be advisable to allow individual inquiries enough time to manifest before closely associating them with thorough conceptual definitions or predefined methodological routines. Many concepts linked to the study of embodiment are fluid and interconnected, and excessive categorization could potentially detract from the holistic essence of somaesthetics.

To enhance one's own somaesthetic inquiry, and especially the later reflection and reporting of the methods used, it can be beneficial to pose questions at various stages of the inquiry. For instance: When I refer to "method" at this stage of my inquiry, do I mean (a) an embodied method through which I exercise my own somaesthetic sensibility, which I may also teach to others; (b) an embodied method I am about to explore and/or develop; (c) an approach through which I will assess, evaluate, and enhance the aforementioned embodied methods; (d) the tools by which I will conduct analytical observations of my data or articulate my insights in relation to a broader field of research, arts, or somatics? For clarity, identifying the different roles that the methods play in one's somaesthetic inquiry—though not necessarily as described above—

can be helpful. In somaesthetic inquiry, the same embodied methods may fulfill varying roles at different stages of the process, and their roles might differ even within specific situations. For instance, employing a specific embodied method as a practical tool to enhance one's body consciousness could also become the focus of development during the pragmatic stage of the inquiry.

Clarity can also be attained by creating classifications for diverse practices and methods within the broader field of embodiment, as recommended by Ben Spatz—not merely for the purpose of categorization but to provide context for one's inquiry (Spatz, 2017, p. 12). Spatz conceptually distinguishes *practice* from *technique*. The former refers to embodied activities as they manifest in the unique situations and settings of everyday life for specific individuals or groups. Spatz regards practice as a “fundamental concept of embodied research,” yet he emphasizes the necessity of the concept of technique to consider the repetitions and regularities within these activities (Spatz, 2017, p. 7). Similarly, I interpret *embodied practices* as activities observed in everyday life — but also as functional domains like running or stretching. These encompass “actual performance or application, repeated customary action, the usual way of doing something” as elucidated by The Merriam-Webster Dictionary's definition of “practice.” Along the same lines, I understand methods as more structured “systematic plans” or “procedures,” constituting “bodies of skills or techniques” aimed at achieving specific goals. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). *Somatic methods* are loosely connected embodied approaches that emerged during and after the “somatic turn.” They share common features such as an emphasis on embodied experience, integration of body and mind, the intent to develop body consciousness and self-awareness, proprioception, the alteration of embodied habits by exploring movement patterns, an interest in processes, and the exploration of body authority and ownership (Green, 2002a; 2002b; Rouhiainen, 2006, pp. 10, 25; see also Shusterman 2000). As expected, these frameworks of practices, methods, and techniques exhibit considerable overlap. In certain inquiries, it might be suitable to maintain more flexibility with these concepts or employ them in diverse manners.

In reference to the above, I perceive *somaesthetic practices* as more general and *somaesthetic methods* as more specific embodied or somatic approaches that incorporate an aesthetic element in some way. Shusterman has distinguished between *representational, performative, and experiential somaesthetic practices*. The first focuses on altering the body's appearance (e.g., makeup or bodybuilding), the second on nurturing somaesthetic experiences (e.g., meditation), and the third on enhancing body performance and health (e.g., sports) (Shusterman, 1999, pp. 305–307; 2012, p. 44). Additionally, it might be beneficial to specify *somaesthetic research methods* further, encompassing the previously mentioned somaesthetic methods and potentially integrating more conventional research methods when necessary to complement somaesthetic investigations.

*Somaesthetics and somatics* share some practices and methods, yet they should be distinguished as somaesthetics provides a broader theoretical and philosophical perspective on the somatic as well as other embodied practices and methods. For instance, somaesthetics can facilitate critical examinations of somatic methods, considering their cultural and social contexts, thereby expanding the scope of inquiry beyond the methods themselves. This is crucial because these methods often lack explicit clarification of their underlying values, let alone critical evaluations. For example, even if an embodied method claims to be inclusive, it might not be suitable or accessible for diverse bodies. Dancer and researcher Leena Rouhiainen highlights criticisms of somatics, citing its lack of a unified theory, ambiguity regarding the values and norms embedded in methods, and its emphasis on holistic approaches that still consist of

disconnected methods. Moreover, subjective perspectives and an uncritical methodological approach diminish the credibility of the somatics field. Shusterman's analytic dimension within somaesthetics, with its ontological considerations, offers a solution to this issue, as discussed further ahead (Rouhiainen, 2006, pp. 24–25).

## 2. What Makes a Somaesthetic Inquiry?

How do we define investigations within the realm of somaesthetics? Is the somaesthetic essence of a study determined by its objects, methods, or theoretical framework? These questions are best left open-ended, although I will venture to propose an outline to help identify and articulate the somaesthetic of one's inquiry. Presently, there is a considerable amount of research in embodiment that, while not explicitly somaesthetic, could arguably fit within this field. I suggest that the somaesthetic nature of an inquiry may manifest in various ways: (1) through the pursued aims, (2) inherent characteristics of the examined phenomenon (the study's object), (3) as a perspective guiding the inquiry, (4) within the overall design of the process, encompassing methods and materials, or (5) as part of a theoretical and philosophical framework. Often, the aims and subjects of somaesthetic exploration emerge from a somaesthician's personal interests—driven by a desire to acquire or deepen specific bodily skills or address social, cultural, or practical injustices. It might also stem from a desire to introduce a missing perspective in academic or somatic discussions. The inquiry might revolve around issues concerning embodiment and agency or aim to unveil hidden potentials within a particular method.

(1) *The aims* of somaesthetic studies can be broad and diverse. They might encompass cultivating somaesthetic experiences, actions, or skills, innovating and advancing somatic methods, pedagogies, processes, or technologies, fostering well-being through heightened body consciousness, influencing social norms, practices, and policies concerning the body, and expanding knowledge about embodied experiences. When initiating a somaesthetic process, the objective might intentionally remain open-ended, allowing it to evolve through practical experimentation in various real-life scenarios. In terms of the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions of somaesthetics (Shusterman, 2012, p. 142), which I will discuss further in the next subchapter, the inquiry's aim can encompass a wide range, from critical socio-cultural analyses of embodied practices to developing methods and using one's experiential insights to create embodied knowledge. These dimensions can also intersect, such as when using practical bodily actions to generate insights for socio-cultural understanding. The overall investigative approach can be philosophical, critical, comparative, descriptive, reflective, evaluative, prescriptive, or empirical, depending on how the inquiry relates to the aforementioned dimensions of somaesthetics.

(2) *The object of study* could be any somaesthetic activity or experience, as well as the environmental, material, social, cultural, linguistic, political, or historical context or scenario surrounding such activities or experiences. The focus can also remain undefined at the onset of the somaesthetic process, allowing examination to occur organically in actual situations, observing how various somaesthetic phenomena intersect within these contexts.<sup>1</sup> The focus could span broader bodily practices or habits (like walking or office work), more refined and intentionally crafted methods (such as yoga or mindfulness), or the exploration of arts or other

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<sup>1</sup> This kind of *transactional* approach was devised by John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley (1949). Unfortunately, I cannot discuss it here further, even though it could be one possible departure for developing somaesthetic methods. In music sociology, researcher Mark Rimmer (2020) has proposed the use of a transactional approach for a comprehensive, situational, and environmental examination of musical agency, and I have, in turn, developed a parallel method while analyzing sound environments (Tarvainen, 2023).

disciplines demanding particular skills (like music, dance, or long jump). Spatz suggests that inquiry can categorize physical practices based on the study's needs, such as into larger generic categories (movement or rhythm, dance or martial arts), regional and cultural traditions, more specific named traditions, narrower technical terms, and references to instructors and colleagues in the same field (Spatz, 2017, p. 12). In selecting the object of the study, one can draw from Shusterman's division of somaesthetic practices and methods into representational, performative, and experiential categories, as previously discussed. These classifications can assist in defining the study's focus, such as concentrating on the experiential aspects within a specific embodied practice. Shusterman stresses the importance of exploring and advancing experiential somaesthetics as a balance to the more dominant attention given to performative and representational aspects within Western culture (Shusterman, 2012, p. 111). I believe that research can center on somaesthetic experiences even if the observed embodied practice is performative or representational—and vice versa. This “counter-view” approach could yield valuable insights that offer perspectives not inherently intrinsic to the somaesthetic phenomenon.

In somaesthetic inquiry, the human being is perceived as an integrated body-mind entity, referred to as the soma, rather than being viewed as distinct physiological and psychological facets. The aesthetic dimension can emerge in a study either through culturally defined aesthetic activities, such as arts, or through other activities where aesthetic experience is inherent. Dewey's pragmatism offers guidance, urging us to view our everyday lives as potential arenas for aesthetic experience. Shusterman further underscores the diversity within somaesthetics, advocating for exploration across a wide spectrum of embodied practices. He has personally focused on selected forms of somaesthetic practice himself to explicitly articulate the relevant topics related to the approach under development. (Shusterman, 2012, p. 12.)

When choosing (3) *the perspective* for a somaesthetic inquiry, it is worth considering whether the embodied knowledge is formed based on the investigator's own embodied experiences or whether other people's experiences should also be considered. Embodied or somaesthetic knowledge can include knowledge “about the body” or, even more preferably, knowledge “from/through the body” (cf. Scialom, 2021, p. 20). There are various approaches through which a somaesthetician can engage with their subject of inquiry. The perspective—or, rather, in this context, “the point of experience” or “the point of agency”—can range from being distanced, participatory, immersed, affected, or studious, and this standpoint can evolve throughout the process. The process can also be initiated from different directions, namely analytic insight, demand in practice, or awareness arising from practical embodied practice.

How do somaesthetics appear in terms of (4) *the methods and data*? I will discuss these later in more detail, but let me briefly note here that it could be beneficial to reflect on how the somatic and aesthetic aspects are present in one's methods, data, and implementation. The focus lies on methods that approach the body “from the inside out,” as experienced firsthand, rather than examining it from an external perspective as an object of observation (Hanna, 1988, p. 19). One can also ask themselves what kind of evidence they would like to offer the readers (or other audience) to support one's arguments. One can, for example, use philosophical argumentation and theoretical engagement with previous research, the collection and analysis of data, or critically apply the existing methods of development and testing. Examples of suitable means for producing or collecting data for somaesthetic purposes include various combinations of embodied methods and reflections, phenomenological approaches, ethnography, autoethnography, participatory and interventional methods, practice as research, artistic methods, and maybe even narrative methods. Interviews, surveys, media or archive

materials, and materials produced during evaluation, testing, or development, to name some, could be used and analyzed by applying virtually any method while keeping the somaesthetic perspective on top.

In constructing (5) *the theoretical and philosophical framework* for somaesthetic inquiry, one can start, for example, from previous somaesthetic research, which includes, in addition to Shusterman's numerous philosophical texts (e.g., 2008; 2012), many somaesthetic analyses already conducted in various fields (e.g., Bratkowski, 2012; Dhillon, 2015; Granger, 2015; Heinrich, 2023; Höök, 2018; Macpherson, 2021; McKerrell, 2012; Mullis, 2016; Rynnänen, 2015; Smith, 2017; Tarvainen, 2018a, 2018b). One can also lean on the classics on embodiment that have influenced the humanistic and social sciences at large (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Mauss) and, of course, on the related works on embodiment and aesthetics in one's own discipline. When writing theses or academic journal articles, it is understandably required to link one's findings and insights to previous research in the field in question. This should be no problem, as the field of somaesthetics welcomes the interdisciplinary connections between somaesthetic inquiries and various fields of research, from philosophy to biology (Shusterman, 2017, p. 11). On a theoretical level, it is advisable to reflect on the suitability of the theories used and if they can work side by side in the research without creating major ontological contradictions.

In the introduction of this article, I posed the question, "What are the potential aims, objects, perspectives, methods, data, and theoretical frameworks of a somaesthetic inquiry?" essentially inquiring about its research design. In summary, *the aims* of somaesthetic inquiry may be analytic, pragmatic, and/or practical, and the focus is often on cultivating body consciousness, harnessing somaesthetic experiences, and generating embodied knowledge. *The object of study* might be representational, performative, and/or experiential somaesthetic activities and experiences. Reflection on the chosen *perspective(s)* for the inquiry and the roles of investigators and participants is often integral to somaesthetic inquiries. Somatic, aesthetic, and experiential aspects play pivotal roles in *the methods and data* of such inquiries, while *the theoretical and philosophical framework* is typically situated within prior somaesthetic research or other relevant fields such as philosophy, research, arts, or other embodied disciplines.

### 3. Methods in Analytic, Pragmatic, and Practical Somaesthetics

Shusterman defines the three scopes of this approach as *analytic*, *pragmatic*, and *practical somaesthetics*, and this division also helps structure the methodological side of the approach. To put it briefly, (1) analytic somaesthetics is descriptive and theoretical, looking at the embodiment in a broader social, political, historical, or cultural context; (2) pragmatic somaesthetics is comparative evaluation and development of specific embodied activities, practices, methods, pedagogies, processes, or interactions, and (3) practical somaesthetics, for its part, is actual engagement in embodied practices, as the focus of observation is more situational. (Shusterman, 2012, p. 142.) Within these three scopes, which can be understood as the different dimensions, phases, or emphases of the somaesthetic examination, the applied methods may also be different. (1) Analytic somaesthetics, as the name implies, could utilize the analytically oriented methods; (2) pragmatic somaesthetics, in turn, can include various methods of evaluation and development; (3) practical somaesthetics consists of hands-on embodied methods. In what follows, I will further explore these different dimensions of somaesthetics and the potential methodological solutions they provide.



### **(1) Methods for analytic reflections**

*Analytic somaesthetics* can be descriptive, explanatory, critical, philosophical, or empirical. Soma and its aesthetic dimensions are reflected in relation to consciousness, knowledge, world, agency, culture, norms, practices, values, ideologies, and institutions, among other things. In the academic context, the discoveries of analytic somaesthetics can be linked to, for example, philosophical, aesthetic, ontological, historical, socio-political, anthropological, psychological, or biological knowledge of the human body and mind. (Shusterman, 1999, pp. 304, 307; 2007, p. 11; 2012, pp. 42, 188.) Within the domain of analytic somaesthetics, reflection, articulation, and connections to previous knowledge are paramount. The tools used in this stage can be, for example, methods for structuring and studying different kinds of data or philosophical argumentation techniques that aim to relate the knowledge to previous relevant debates in one's field and somaesthetics. They also allow one to examine the somaesthetic phenomenon in a broader cultural context and articulate its hidden norms and values. Articulation in written form may be necessary, although other forms of presentation could also be used and developed.

In an academic setting, the toolbox of analytic methods may include traditional research methods applied in a deliberate manner or even brand-new methods. Outside of the academic context, using actual research methods may be irrelevant. However, even then, it would be valuable to adopt a certain level of analytic grip to open up one's somaesthetic process and illuminate the underlying cultural and social values related to it. The data of analytic somaesthetics can be anything that reveals the above-mentioned cultural, political, or normative aspects of embodied practices. These can be previous philosophical or scholarly texts, newspaper articles, archive material, images, audio recordings, videos, interviews, works of art, and so on. Basically, any data and materials can be analyzed from a somaesthetic perspective — given that the content is relevant to the topics of somaesthetics.

Good examples of analytic somaesthetics — in addition to Shusterman's texts — are, for example, John Toner's and Barbara Gail Montero's (2022) review of the research on the peak performance in sport in relation to Shusterman's ideas on body consciousness and habits, and Höök's (2018, pp. 3820–4157) discussion of the ethics in soma design related to dualism, feminism, privilege and the politics of algorithms. From the latter, I would like to highlight a passage that illustrates how somaesthetics can operate from the practical to the analytic level — from the embodied experience to the thought processes and values of the researcher.

*“My viewpoint was that cultivating the body seemed like a selfish activity, directing attention to the self and thereby avoiding caring for society. But gradually, I came to see how it enabled me to take a holistic stance on some of the horrible plagues we battle right now — misogyny, racism, privilege, and denial of climate change. Although somaesthetic design will not remedy those issues — they are far too complex for that — it offers me, as a design researcher, a path toward a form of activism.”* (Höök, 2018, p. 3835.)

Another example is my own analytic and critical look at Western singing culture's aesthetic ideals and norms by analyzing the somaesthetic experiences of the d/Deaf, vocally disordered, and “tone-deaf” singers. In that study, I examined the experiences of a wide range of participants, not so much to find generalizations but to bring out a rich spectrum of varying experiences. As research data, I used free-form responses to internet surveys, interviews, and social media content such as YouTube comment threads and analyzed them with thematic analysis and close reading. In both the collection and analysis of the data, the focus was on themes relevant to

somaesthetics, namely on how the singers and those commenting on their voices relate to the vocal body and embodied experience, in other words, how they used “the somatic modes of attention,” to borrow a term from the anthropologist Thomas J. Csordas (1993). (Tarvainen 2018a; 2018b; 2021.)

## ***(2) Methods of evaluating and developing***

*Pragmatic somaesthetics* is critical, comparative, transformative, normative, and prescriptive in nature. In particular, it aims to evaluate and develop embodied practices and methods, not just to describe them — and that is how somaesthetics differs, for example, from most phenomenological approaches. It is also worth mentioning that the pragmatic approach builds on the analytic one, as it relies on a certain knowledge about the human body — what the body is ontologically, physiologically, or socially. (Shusterman, 1999, p. 304–305; 2010, 219; 2012, 42, 188.)

The pragmatic process of evaluating and developing generates not only critical knowledge of embodied practices but also proposals or even new methods, practices, or products. Alternatively, existing practices may be improved to meet people’s somaesthetic needs better. These tools used here may overlap with the ones used in the practical somaesthetics, which I will discuss later. However, whereas practical somaesthetics focuses on elaborating one’s own embodied experience, pragmatic somaesthetics usually focuses on other people’s experiences in one way or another. This could happen by considering how others experience a given set of exercises or how the exercise could be guided to facilitate embodied insights.

In pragmatic somaesthetics, ideation, reflection, structuring, and evaluation are conducted, whether in the form of written texts, spoken words, pictures, sounds, or others. These outputs can be used as data, along with other collected materials, like survey answers, interviews, and various types of evaluation or testing data. Within this pragmatic framework, the inquiry can be linked conceptually to the pedagogical theories or the development practices in one’s field.

Höök refers to the methods she applies in the pragmatic phase of her work as “soma design methods,” whereby designers conceptualize and experiment somatically with a technology or product under development. She divides “soma design methods” into ideation, engagement with materials, and evaluation. The first of these includes slowstorming, aesthetic laborations, and embodied sketching. Höök reflects on how the somaesthetic approach differs from other methods commonly used in design. For example, compared to usually relatively fast-paced brainstorming, somaesthetic slowstorming is, as its name suggests, deliberately slow. Here, the ideas are not necessarily written down but given a form that can be adequately perceived with the senses. Mapping of user experiences is also an essential part of the pragmatic phase. The interest is not so much in the general experience of a large number of users as it is in more refined perceptions. Therefore, the users may be involved in the process as “soma cocreators,” providing more detailed experience and ideas for product development. (Höök, 2018, pp. 3176, 3430–3437, 3670, 3745.)

Another example of pragmatic somaesthetics is the musicologist Simon McKerrell’s (2012) study, where he applied fieldwork methods such as participation, auto-ethnography, and ethnographic interviews to study the somaesthetics of listening in the field of traditional music. He has critically examined musicology and aesthetics and developed “an ethnography of hearing” that could better reveal the essential embodied dimensions of musical understanding. In this sense, he has conducted pragmatic somaesthetics, that is, developing methods to remedy the shortcomings of the earlier methodology in his research field.

One of the methods for reflecting on and sharing embodied experiences with others is *the body map*. I employ this approach in my Voicefulness® workshops, typically following an extensive free-form vocal exercise. Participants express their experiences by drawing, writing, or otherwise marking—each in their unique style—specific details on a piece of paper featuring the outline of the human body. Subsequently, these experiences are discussed collectively as a group. Recalling, visualizing, and verbalizing one's own experience can contribute to developing body awareness. These maps could also be used to analyze some aspects of somaesthetic experiences. (Tarvainen, n.d.) Similarly, body maps have been utilized before by Höök (2018, p. 3703) in the form of the *body sheet method* as well as Claudia Núñez-Pacheco and Lian Loke (2016) in the form of the *body map method*.

### **(3) Practices and methods for enhancing somaesthetic sensibility**

**Practical somaesthetics** is basically the practice of embodied methods in real life. Practical somaesthetics is systematic and reflective embodied training of one's own soma in its representational, experiential, or performative aspects. (Shusterman, 2012, pp. 45, 188.) It is, therefore, practical in nature, and the object — or rather the focus — of examination is one's own embodied experience. Whereas the knowledge reflected in the field of analytic somaesthetics is linked to previous research and the work carried out in the pragmatic field to pedagogical and developmental approaches, in the field of practical somaesthetics, the embodied experience is naturally linked to one's life history, and the social and cultural situations, but may also be reflected in relation to the experiences of other people.

A somaesthete uses their own soma's sensibility, acquired over a lifetime, to connect practically with the phenomenon under study, producing embodied insights, reflections, and understanding. As should be evident by now, practical somaesthetic methods are embodied practices and methods one uses to cultivate one's senses and body awareness. The person performing practical somaesthetics is usually in the role of a student or learner. The focus is on the embodied perceptions and the insights that stem from them. These insights do not necessarily need to be reflected through language but can profoundly affect how one understands oneself as a corporeal and social being. They impact how one encounters the world and other people through the embodied agency.

The practical methods applied in somaesthetics often have the following characteristics: They evolve embodied perceptions, sensibility, and body consciousness; They utilize the simplifying and slowing down of bodily action, allowing time for the discovery of tacit knowledge that tends to remain hidden in everyday experiences; They also engage body consciousness by excluding excess stimuli, directing attention in a controlled manner to different parts of the body, making changes that keep the focus alert, and concentrating on the present moment; In addition, the methods like *making strange* may be used by orchestrating experiences that are attention-catching, rich, and memorable; Also the reflection on the experience is often used with practical methods, either through discussion with others, writing, drawing or other means of structuring. (Höök, 2018, pp. 869–872; Shusterman, 2012, pp. 15, 117, 297–298, 304.) The practical work may result in materials such as research diaries, autoethnographic texts, videos, audio recordings, or images. The perspective here may be based solely on one's own experience or the experiences of several people through artistic collaboration, participatory research, or other equivalent activities.

Shusterman teaches his students somaesthetic introspection in the form of a body scan in order to cultivate their somaesthetic understanding. (Shusterman 2012, pp. 112–122.)

I have applied improvised voice and movement to practice and teach body awareness and somaesthetic sensibility, utilizing the method of *Voicefulness*<sup>®</sup> developed by me and *Movingness*<sup>®</sup> developed by Peter Appel (Appel, n.d.; Tarvainen, n.d.). Höök details five techniques designers can use to develop their somaesthetic sensibility. Those are “focusing on change and interest,” “disrupting the habitual,” Laban movement analysis, autoethnographies, and “engaging with other somaesthetic connoisseurs.” She notes that designers can easily get stuck in a repetition of familiar mannerisms, whereas challenging oneself through new bodily practices can open up new directions in the design process. (Höök, 2018, pp. 3229, 3787.)

Since there are numerous successful implementations of practical somaesthetics, I would like to give two more examples: David A. Granger (2015) has applied practical somaesthetics in anti-racist education, which starts from identifying racist embodied habits and related feelings in one’s body. Eric Mullis (2016), for their part, brings together contemporary feminist philosophy and the practice of contact improvisation to explore the social values and ethical attitudes related to gender and ability through movement. The interaction with other bodies through touch and the cultivation of trust in contact improvisation serve to promote embodied ethics. Mullis’ work, I think, nicely combines the starting point of analytic somaesthetics — the examination of social values and ethical attitudes — with practical somaesthetics using contact improvisation.

How to answer the question posed in the introduction, “What methods could be utilized in analytic, pragmatic, and practical scopes of a somaesthetic inquiry?” In analytical somaesthetics, one could use, for example, philosophical argumentation or academic research methods from the respective fields to explore cultural, political, or normative aspects of embodied practices. Pragmatic somaesthetics can make use of various methods of ideation, reflection, structuring, and evaluation from relevant fields. Practical somaesthetics primarily involves methods that enhance body consciousness, which could include an array of techniques from somatics or adapted methods tailored for somaesthetics. Materials and data used in somaesthetic inquiries encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from archival materials, articles, scholarly literature, questionnaire responses, interviews, evaluation or testing data, written texts, images, audio recordings (e.g., sounds, spoken words), videos, sensory materials, to diverse forms of art.

#### 4. Evaluating Methodological Positions

As embodied beings, our experiences are inherently tied to our situated perspectives (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, p. 499; see also Hannula et al., 2014, p. 9). I posit that the somaesthetic inquiry process fundamentally involves awareness, reflection, and articulation of diverse experiential positions and knowledge production. First, the somaesthetician should be able to distinguish — either in real time or retrospectively — their actions within the analytic, pragmatic, or practical dimensions of their inquiries. This awareness translates practically into a conscious understanding of one’s actions at any given moment: whether engaging in analytical reflection, pragmatic development, or unveiling embodied findings. Consistently documenting these actions aids in transparently presenting the inquiry process later, ensuring clarity and credibility. Specific somaesthetic inquiries might incline toward analytical, pragmatic, or practical orientations yet often incorporate elements from all these dimensions.

Somaesthetics itself underscores the practice of disciplined consciousness and focus shifting. These skills are central to somaestheticians, not only in their personal embodied experience but also in relating their experiences and actions to the entirety of the inquiry. Ensuring the inquiry’s full transparency happens by describing and critically evaluating the different steps

of the process and the methods used, as well as justifying the choices made. The ability to shift between a broader analytical perspective and an increasingly immersive embodied experience can be seen as a vital skill for a somaesthetician. At best, the insights, understanding, and knowledge produced in the analytic, pragmatic, and practical dimensions can nourish each other. Consequently, attempting to segregate these dimensions during the inquiry rigidly might be unnecessary, if not unfeasible. After all, analytical insights may emanate from practical embodied activities, and conversely, analytical considerations may activate body consciousness, eliciting novel embodied insights.

When using the same methods at different stages of the somaesthetic process, it may be helpful to identify different perspectives, styles of reflection, roles, or positions one adopts within or in relation to these methods. For example, the methods of pragmatic and practical somaesthetics may be the same. However, they require a different attitude, as practical somaesthetics focuses on learning through the methods rather than developing them. In pragmatic work, the somaesthetician takes on the role of an “evaluator,” “developer,” “designer,” or other equivalent, whereas in practical work, it is more of a “student.” The roles of a student and developer can intertwine seamlessly in one’s experience because the process is often integrated and holistic. However, during this process, for example, while doing a bodywork exercise, one may distinguish shifts in their “modes” or “attitudes” during the practice. At one moment, they may be immersed in their own experience, after which the reflective mode may be activated as some thoughts and outlines of the experience arise in a form that can be remembered and maybe later discussed or written down. At times, one may focus on evaluative thinking and structuring and, from there, occasionally delve into embodied awareness to recollect a past felt experience. A good example of the distinction between these pragmatic and practical somaesthetic roles, modes, or attitudes are the activities described by Höök as “training somaesthetic skills” and “soma design methods” (Höök, 2018). Since somaesthetics is also, to a great extent, a practice of consciousness and focus, such shifts, when made in a coordinated and deliberate way, can be seen as an integral skill of a somaesthetician. However, this may not always be easy, and transitions between roles, for example, from a reflective to an evaluative state, may generate internal or external conflicts and tensions.

Explicating the different methodological grips, such as illustrated above, is vital if the same activity is used in different scopes of the somaesthetic inquiry for different purposes. In addition, one of the significant strengths of somaesthetics is its critical angle on embodied practices and methods, and this is worth utilizing to ensure that the inquiry becomes more than just a celebration of a practice that is dear to oneself. In general, I do not see a problem in examining (with) the practices and methods one is already engaged in, as it is not unusual in other research fields for a researcher to investigate a phenomenon in which they are themselves involved. The study of a familiar embodied method could be compared to the work of an ethnomusicologist who examines their own musical culture in a participatory and analytic way. They consciously position themselves in the settings of musical-cultural activities differently than they are used to, observing these activities from a fresh perspective and participating in them in new ways. Likewise, Shusterman describes a corresponding crossover between comparative critique and practice in other disciplines. For example, a philosopher may well criticize the philosophical praxis they use. Similarly, a researcher of religion does not have to endorse the religions they are studying, and a musicologist can appreciate music-making while criticizing specific techniques or styles of musical production. (Shusterman, 2007, p. 15.)

Höök points out that no method, even somaesthetic, would always produce good results. It is a matter of using methods competently — expertise and sound judgment are essential

for successful implementation. (Höök, 2018, 3779.) When studying embodied experience, it is easy to be misled into thinking that experiences are universal — aren't we all embodied beings? However, Green cautions against seeking “universality in the rules that govern somatic principles,” emphasizing how our experiences are shaped by socio-cultural circumstances (Green, 2002, p. 117). Even distinctions between song and speech, or music and dance, are cultural, not universal, perceptions of these bodily activities, as Spatz reminds us (Spatz, 2017, p. 9). Therefore, it is important to critically assess the embodied methods used, regardless of their effectiveness in the investigator's own practice. It is worth asking: Does this method work for other people, for example, for those with physical restrictions, or is the embodied “development” brought about by this method a desirable development for someone living in a different cultural context? Ask: Does this method accommodate others, such as those with physical limitations? Is the embodied “development” desirable in different cultural contexts? Shusterman emphasizes that “development” in any context relies on underlying norms (Shusterman, 2007, p. 148; 2012, p. 22). Ultimately, practitioners of somaesthetics should reflect on the cultural and ontological basis of the methods they use, maintaining an appropriate distance to balance practical engagement.

As mentioned earlier, embodied knowledge can stem from the investigator's own bodily experiences or those of others. Carla Rice cautions that a strong focus on embodied reflexivity might inadvertently prioritize the investigator's experiences, marginalizing the experiences of others, including study participants (Rice, 2009; Chadwick, 2017, p. 6). A proficient somaesthetician recognizes the need to involve diverse bodies in certain inquiries. Asking questions like “Whose soma is exploring or being explored?” or “Whose bodily experiences shape embodied knowledge?” is crucial. These questions affect the quality of evidence collected or generated in the inquiry. Successful implementation might also be measured by the degree to which the inquiry encourages participant action. Reflecting on the researcher's relationship with participants, co-investigators, or collaborators is essential, shedding light on power dynamics and the influence of different embodied experiences involved. Whether the somaesthetician is a novice or an expert in the studied embodied practice, they should acknowledge that their own experiences and skills impact the accessed embodied knowledge. However, this does not imply that information from a beginner would necessarily be inferior to that from an experienced practitioner. It should also be noted that as sentient beings within our environments, inquiries should consider the soma within its surroundings, encompassing interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts.

During the inquiry process, a somaesthetician becomes conscious of their own embodied practice and analytical investigations in relation to preceding traditions. They familiarize themselves with the relevant texts, works, and methods from these traditions for their inquiries and articulate how their work aligns with them. This involves establishing connections and perceiving one's inquiry as part of a larger collective effort to accumulate knowledge and comprehension. It involves situating oneself cognitively, culturally, socially, and even geographically. Even though somaesthetic inquiry is deeply rooted in the somaesthetician's individual embodied experiences, it does not exist in isolation (Hannula et al., 2014, p. 8.). Embodied human experiences don't form in isolation but within a shared process influenced by the physical, social, and cultural environment. From my perspective, one of the remarkable strengths of somaesthetics in generating new knowledge is its focus both on thorough and accurate observation of bodily experiences and reflecting on these experiences within broader contexts. Personally, I think that my own role as a somaesthetician is to better comprehend the diversity of both my own and others' embodied experiences, viewing them as integral parts of broader social and cultural phenomena, potentially aiding in a deeper understanding of humanity.

In this subsection, I have addressed the third question raised in the introduction, presenting perspectives on evaluating the use of somaesthetic methods. These reflections are not meant as strict criteria but rather as guiding markers for somaesthetic practitioners to assess and refine their inquiry process more effectively. Within a somaesthetic inquiry, it is essential to be aware of one's own position. This includes understanding how one relates to different dimensions of somaesthetics, evaluating the efficacy of embodied methods within their socio-cultural contexts, comprehending the evolution of these methods and their interpretation in various contexts, acknowledging the participants in the inquiry, and considering the environmental or socio-cultural backdrop. Additionally, it involves reviewing the contributions of previous authors in one's own field.

## 5. Articulating Somaesthetic Knowledge

Somaesthetic activities and methods can be practiced as such without the need to explain or communicate them to anyone else. However, engaging in a somaesthetic inquiry—whether academic, artistic, wellness-focused, or otherwise—typically involves reflection and the pursuit of transparency. In many aspects, particularly concerning methodology, somaesthetic inquiry diverges from conventional empirical research and, therefore, should not be evaluated solely by traditional academic standards. Nevertheless, somaesthetic research carried out in an academic context, emphasizing empirical aspects, might seek to meet certain criteria characteristic of good qualitative research, aligning with somaesthetics' objectives. For example, by combining and synthesizing sources on the evaluation of qualitative and artistic research<sup>2</sup> and applying them to somaesthetics, a somaesthetician could assess their inquiry's aims and quality based on criteria such as *novelty, creativity, and impact*, alongside its *coherence, consistency, and transparency*. The last three aspects are pivotal in the formulation and communication of somaesthetic knowledge within academic settings.

Coherence means that the inquiry forms a meaningful whole: The methods and practices enable access to pertinent embodied evidence aligned with the set research questions or aims. The inquiry's objectives, focus, methods, evidence/materials, results, and impacts should be clearly articulated. This involves detailing the roles of both the researcher and participants (who?), the inquiry process (what?), the locations and times involved (where and when?), the methods utilized (how?), and the underlying purpose (why?). Consistent and transparent documentation and presentation of all inquiry steps are important. The inquiry should provide sufficient high-quality evidence organized, interpreted, and presented suitably based on the inquiry's objectives. Additionally, it should be thoughtfully linked to previous research or other works within its field.

The first-person perspective is commonly used in somaesthetic writings. As Höök has noticed, this may initially alienate an academic reader looking for objective proof without necessarily finding it. She writes about her own struggles when entering the field of somaesthetics and admits that hypothesis- and rationalization-driven thinking was difficult to break free from, as were the objectivist-reductionist ideals. I see that for a somaesthetician, good argumentative skills are essential, as they enable opening up one's experience in an accessible way without compromising the richness of the description while also linking one's insights to the previous academic tradition in a credible way. Moreover, as Höök points out, it would also be good to share one's somaesthetic journey, as it makes the work more relatable and understandable and

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<sup>2</sup> Burke, 2016, p. 335; Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018, p. 2–6; Hannula ym., 2014, p. 14–15; OECD 2015, 28, 46–49; Yadav, 2022, p. 686

reveals the unique circumstances from which the work originates. Our life experiences — illness, pain, ecstatic feelings, and how we physically live our daily lives — influence how we implement somaesthetics. (Höök, 2018, pp. 323, 410–413, 4208.) Reflections on embodiment have often highlighted the friction between embodied experience and language (e.g., Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, pp. 147-149). Höök explains that conceptualization narrows embodied knowledge since some experiential aspects are more easily described in language than others and, therefore, may dominate the examination. The experiences located in a particular part of the body and which are “ontologically explicit,” such as pain, seem to be easier to express. However, beyond these experiences, a wide range of perceptions are difficult to capture in words, and metaphors play an important role in describing them. Language allows us to sketch ideas quickly, but the description can only serve as a rough indication, not a direct or all-inclusive representation of the experience. Language is a quick tool for reflection and communication, but shifting the focus from linguistic to embodied processes brings slowness with it, as our sensory skills, which are tied to muscle function and neural responses, among other things, change and develop slowly. (Höök, 2018, pp. 883, 906, 2813, 2831.)

While I have emphasized argumentation and clarity here, it is often best to enter the somaesthetic process with an open soma, tolerating, or better yet embracing, the possible ambiguities of the process along the way. Towards the latter stages of the investigation, a more reflective, analytic, and structuring orientation will usually emerge. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if new non-verbal forms of reflecting and structuring somaesthetic knowledge arose in somaesthetics. Similarly, Höök stresses that the articulations of embodied knowledge should be more diverse than they currently are, even in an academic context. Finding appropriate means of articulation is paramount, especially regarding somaesthetic experiences. Articulating embodied experiences and ideas and making them comprehensible to others can take the form of practical embodied interaction, videos, or images, to name some. (Höök, 2018, p. 4247.) While academic fields traditionally contextualize research through a “literature review,” somaesthetics might benefit from a “practice review,” incorporating non-textual sources, as proposed by Spatz in the realm of embodied research (Spatz, 2017, p. 12). He states: “In framing embodied research, critical and philosophical references are optional, while technical references are essential. This is because embodied practice derives its structure and meaning primarily from lineages of technique.” (Spatz, 2017, p. 13.)

Language is a challenge but also a potential tool in a somaesthetic process, as it can be used to enhance somaesthetic introspection. Even in the methods and practices that emphasize the non-linguistic dimension of experience, it is usually necessary to use language to instruct the practice, direct the participants’ focus during the exercise, and describe experiences and their features. (Shusterman, 2012, p. 121.) Shusterman sums up how a somaesthetician could fruitfully relate to language:

*“Body and language, so often posed as oppositional forces competing for primacy or all-subsuming privilege, are both essential for somaesthetics. The key is not to side with one against the other, nor to rank them in importance, but rather (just as we argued with respect to the duo of spontaneous versus self-conscious action) to coordinate them more effectively so that they can work best together.”* (Shusterman, 2012, p. 121.)

According to Shusterman, in somaesthetics, the discursive and non-discursive, reflective and immediate, as well as thought and feeling, can be integrated to create a sense of dimension,



harmony, and clarity in the body. He also reminds us that the primary aim of somaesthetics is not to develop discursive theory but to develop embodied practices — although discourse is needed, for example, in the field of cultural politics, to bring about these aimed changes. (Shusterman, 2012, pp. 16–17, 195.)

During paradigm shifts, new knowledge tends to face strong resistance and criticism in the academic world. Höök points out the importance of explicit verbalization and conceptualization of somaesthetic processes for the sake of their credibility. This should be done so that even the audiences that do not have first-hand experience of in-depth embodied sensibility could understand the arguments — as they eventually might be the readers who review the validity of these processes. Höök also proposes a “protective belt of knowledge” for soma design research, in other words, a well-articulated canon of knowledge that would be meaningful in terms of aesthetic experience. Such a canon could include knowledge articulated in many different forms, such as descriptions of successful and failed processes, first-person experiences, terminology, methods, and explanatory theory. (Höök, 2018, pp. 4195, 4257–4272; see also Gaver & Höök, 2017.) The emergence of such a canon in the general field of somaesthetics would be highly welcome. As Shusterman has argued, the field of research on embodiment is still quite fragmented, and those working on it would benefit from a more collective and interconnected body of knowledge (Shusterman, 1999, p. 304). This collective approach would facilitate the development of the field itself through concepts and methods related to previous inquiries. As Höök has stated, a well-defined conceptual framework and a more coherent field of study would make the somaesthetic approach more appreciated and applicable to other fields as well. This does not imply a univocal but rather a polyphonic and mutually discursive field of somaesthetics. Höök points out that conceptually unifying the field of research does not mean removing the essential dimensions of creativity and experience from the somaesthetic approach. Nor should it be the role of the canon of knowledge to rigidify the field of research, thus preventing the continual evolution of the paradigm. (Höök, 2018, pp. 4270–4276; see also Gaver & Höök, 2017.)

In the introduction, the question posed was, “How do we articulate somaesthetic knowledge?” Various aspects were discussed, including coherence, consistency, transparency, the first-person perspective, validity, collective knowledge formation, and established canons of texts and embodied methods. The acknowledgment of language limitations in expressing embodied knowledge and the necessity for innovative, non-verbal means to structure and communicate such experiences were highlighted. A somaesthetician endeavors to present findings and insights gained from inquiry in a clear, comprehensible, and credible manner. Similar to creating a theoretical framework, the reporting phase aims to situate one’s work in a specific context and connect with others, fostering a common understanding by dedicating time and effort to communicate findings effectively.

## 6. Conclusions

Somaesthetics provides an open field where professionals across diverse disciplines can align their work somatically and aesthetically, integrating their embodied experiences into the thinking process. Within this realm, they generate knowledge, methods, practices, technologies, and products by exploring the aesthetic potentials of the soma. Somaesthetics offers invaluable guidance for interpreting aesthetic embodied phenomena in various cultural, social, or normative contexts. At its core, a somaesthetic inquiry aims to expand philosophical understanding, generate empirical knowledge, develop practices, or execute practical embodied processes. This approach does not prescribe dogmatic rules or predefined methods; rather, it

urges practitioners to forge unique approaches drawing from diverse traditions and methods across disciplines. Particularly, methods that not only analyze but also strive to transform social and cultural phenomena at the level of body and experience resonate well with somaesthetics. However, this creative freedom, even within an academic setting, may introduce challenges in presenting a coherent and comprehensible synthesis accessible to readers less versed in somaesthetic expertise.

A somaesthetician, encompassing roles such as philosopher, researcher, pedagogue, artist, or wellness professional, is inherently inclined towards enhancing their body consciousness or commencing such exploration. This journey can unfold through specific embodied methods or via the practice of any bodily skill or everyday mindfulness. In addition to a general somaesthetically attuned lifestyle, somaestheticians' immersion in specific somaesthetic processes can enhance their somatic skills and derive insights from personal and others' experiences. These structured or temporal processes, akin to research projects, developmental interventions, or artistic endeavors, gradually render a somaesthetician acutely aware of how embodied beings act, think, and perceive the world—acknowledging the fundamental impact of soma on worldviews and values.

In academic contexts, discussing methods necessitates a connection to the research design. Methods are chosen to collect or produce evidence that illuminates new embodied insights, answers research questions, justifies arguments, or fulfills project objectives. The critical juncture in an inquiry lies where embodied insights transform into evidence—materializing through writing, drawing, singing, or molding of variable matters to communicate somaesthetic experiences. While not diving deeply into these specific junctures or their methods in this article, the focus has been on outlining the research design that enables the extraction and sharing of experiences stemming from them. The questions posed in this article regarding the somaesthetic inquiry's research design, methods, evaluation, and articulation of somaesthetic knowledge could serve as a tool for readers initiating their own inquiries.

At the start of this article, I presented four questions regarding A. the research design (aims, objects, methods, etc.) of the somaesthetic inquiry, B. the methods, C. their evaluation, and D. the articulation of somaesthetic knowledge. Throughout this article, I have provided answers to these questions, offering a framework that readers may find helpful as a tool for their own inquiries.

**A. *Variety of aims and approaches:*** The aims of a somaesthetic inquiry vary from fostering, practicing, and developing somaesthetic-related experiences, skills, actions, and practices to influencing social norms and policies and enhancing well-being. While generally centered on unearthing embodied experiences and knowledge, these inquiries may adopt analytic, pragmatic, and/or practical aims or even launch without specific initial objectives. The object of study spans various somaesthetic activities, experiences, and their representational, performative, or experiential aspects, as well as their surrounding environmental, social, cultural, linguistic, political, or historical contexts. Acknowledging the human being as a unified body-mind, somaesthetic inquiries involve introspection regarding the methods and practices used, shedding light on the formation of embodied knowledge. Theoretical and philosophical frameworks are ideally rooted within prior somaesthetic research, extending to related works on embodiment and aesthetics while connecting the inquiry to academic, artistic, or somatic disciplines.

**B. *Materials for communicating embodied knowledge:*** In analytic somaesthetics, written expressions and philosophical argumentation play significant roles, encompassing a wide spectrum of materials exploring cultural, political, or normative facets of embodied practices.

Pragmatic somaesthetics' diverse methods involve reflection, evaluation, ideation, and data collection, yielding a rich array of written texts, spoken words, images, sounds, and other evaluative data. Practical somaesthetic methods focus on cultivating body awareness and enhancing embodied perceptions, often involving touch, movement, body scanning, contact, and voice improvisation, among others. These methods are utilized to practically engage with the phenomenon under study and generate embodied insights and reflections that may not be articulated verbally. Participants may co-create or collaborate and create research diaries, autoethnographic texts, videos, or audio recordings documenting the embodied knowledge produced during this phase.

*C. Positioning in Somaesthetic Inquiry:* The execution of a somaesthetic inquiry can be evaluated, for instance, based on how effectively it employs the inherent skill of directing awareness in somaesthetics. A somaesthetician is conscious of their bodily situation in the world and their position concerning the analytic, pragmatic, and practical scopes of somaesthetics. Transitioning between somaesthetic perspectives during examination facilitates clear descriptions and justifications of the choices made in the inquiry process. Moreover, the position in relation to the employed embodied methods is crucial, allowing for a critical assessment of these methods and their applicability in various contexts beyond the researcher's personal practice. This encompasses considerations of diverse bodies, cultural diversity, and social backgrounds. Examining the various roles in the production of embodied knowledge, comprehending diverse experiences, recognizing individual differences, and contemplating the influence of one's own cultural and social background on the quality of embodied knowledge is essential when contemplating the researcher's relationship with participants.

*D. Coherence, consistency, and transparency:* In the introduction, I raised the question: "How can somaesthetic knowledge be articulated?" This inquiry touches upon aspects like coherence, consistency, transparency, the first-person perspective, validity, collective knowledge formation, established texts, methods, and the understanding of language's limitations and potential in describing embodied knowledge. It emphasizes the necessity for innovative, non-verbal means to structure and communicate embodied experiences. A somaesthetician aims to argue and articulate findings and insights gained through inquiry clearly, comprehensibly, and credibly. Similar to constructing a theoretical framework to contextualize one's inquiry, striving for a shared understanding by dedicating time and effort to communicate findings in the reporting stage helps establish connections.

My goal in this article was to expand the realm of somaesthetics to empirical researchers in academia. When viewed through an academic mindset, even somaesthetics might begin to appear overly structured. Excessively rigid protocols in somaesthetic inquiry could potentially stifle the entire process. Somaesthetics values flow over categorization, focusing on inner guidance from the body rather than adhering strictly to methodological doctrines and external instructions. Therefore, allowing flexibility for the inquiry to evolve in unforeseen directions is more beneficial. However, this does not negate the value of "research design awareness" for those conducting such inquiries. It aids them in understanding their venture beyond conventional boundaries while aligning with academic expectations, contexts, and prior practices.

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