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Examining the Applied Value of Narratives for Professional Practice: An Exploration of Sports Injury Narratives in Action

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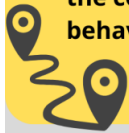
The Applied Value of Sports Injury Narratives

This study explored the applied value of six sports injury narratives (see [here](#)) interviewing 69 elite participants

1. Forewarned is Forearmed

Sports injury narratives can act as route maps in helping athletes navigate future injury experiences.

Sports injury narratives can decrease injury risk by forewarning athletes of the consequences of risk-taking behaviours.



2. Building Blocks to Constructing Meaning(s)

Sports injury narratives can provide athletes with templates to help make sense of, construct, and communicate their own injury story.



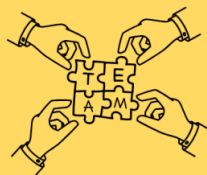
3. Fostering Interpersonal Connections

Sport injury narratives can support athletes' psychological well-being and enhance interpersonal relationships by normalizing athletes injury experiences and facilitating empathy and understanding.



4. A Common Language

Sport injury narratives can promote greater communal dialogue around injured athletes' experiences, creating more interdisciplinary conversations



5. Promoting Communal Responsibility

Sport injury narratives can promote a broader duty of care to injured athletes by prompting consideration of the influence of wider socio-cultural contexts

Storying Sport Injury Experiences — Psychology Of Sport Injury

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13 **Examining the Applied Value of Narratives for Professional Practice:**
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Examining the Applied Value of Narratives for Professional Practice:

An Exploration of Sports Injury Narratives in Action

Heeding calls to expand the resources and approaches to psychologically support injured athletes, this study explored the applied value of socio-cultural sports injury narratives for athletes, coaches, and practitioners. Informed by narrative inquiry and pedagogy, six evidence based sports injury narratives were shared and discussed with 69 elite participants (i.e., athletes, coaches, and practitioners) across 11 focus group interviews. A reflexive thematic analysis identified five themes: 1) Forewarned is Forearmed, 2) Building Blocks to Constructing Meaning(s), 3) Fostering Interpersonal Connections, 4) A Common Language, and 5) Promoting Communal Responsibility. Overall, these themes advance empirical understandings of how narratives can inform professional practice by supporting injured athletes across personal (e.g., meaning making), social (e.g., enhancing interpersonal relationships), and cultural (e.g., promoting communal responsibility) levels.

Lay Summary: Findings highlight the applied value of socio-cultural sports injury narratives for professional practice. Not only can they assist athletes in navigating their future injury experiences and making sense of their past and current injury experiences, but they can also foster dialogue around injured athletes' experiences, create more interdisciplinary conversations, and promote greater communal responsibility.

Practical Implications

- Sports injury narratives act as resources that enable athletes to make sense of, construct, and communicate their own injury story.
- Sport injury narratives enhance relationships between athletes and support networks by facilitating empathy and understanding and promoting more communal dialogue.

- Sports injury narratives promote a broader duty of care towards injured athletes by raising awareness of how broader socio-cultural contexts constrain and/or enable their experiences.

Keywords: qualitative research, stories, sports injury interventions, sports injury prevention, sports injury rehabilitation.

Introduction

In elite sport, where athletes' livelihoods are often dependent upon sports participation, an injury can have devastating psychological consequences. For example, injury has been identified as one of the main triggers for an elite athlete to develop a mental illness including depression, generalized anxiety, and suicide ideation (Gledhill, 2021). Despite these psychological ramifications, the socio-cultural milieu surrounding elite athletes can often negate and normalize their injury experiences by depicting them as 'part and parcel' of the fabric of elite sport (Barker Ruchti et al., 2019). Moreover, while storylines of triumph and positivity are often welcomed and reinforced within elite sporting cultures, storylines associated with 'negative' injury experiences are often marginalized and described as creating tensions for athletes as they represent 'weakness' (McGannon et al., 2021). Collectively these psycho-social-cultural influences can both amplify elite athletes' risk of injury (e.g., by normalizing injury and encouraging athletes to play through pain) and inflame the psychological difficulties associated with injury by limiting the opportunities available to athletes to frame, interpret, and express their injury experiences (Everard et al., 2023).

Until now, researchers within sport injury psychology have largely aimed to support injured athletes' well-being and welfare by understanding how they respond to, manage, and cope with their injury experiences (Wadey & Day, 2022). This body of research has led to a rigorous evidence base and the development of interventions and resources to help inform professional practice (Evans & Brewer, 2022). Yet, while this field of research has significantly

advanced our understanding of injured athletes' psychological experiences, a shortcoming of this field is that it maintains a predominant lens on the injured athlete. That is, while the social context is acknowledged, primacy is given to how injured athletes think about and interpret the situations they find themselves in (Wadey & Day, 2022). Within this remit, interventions to support injured athletes focus on altering injured athletes' appraisals through cognitive behavioral means (e.g., self-talk, imagery, goal setting). Notwithstanding the benefits of these psychological skills interventions, researchers have argued that this focus on cognitive strategies alone, may not be adequately supporting injured athletes for whom the wider socio-cultural challenges associated with injury are a key concern (Ronkainen & Ryba, 2017). Moreover, these interventions focus only on 'upskilling' the injured athlete, and hence negate social responsibility as the injured athlete is deemed as being responsible for managing their injury experiences. Towards this end, recently researchers have called to diversify our theorizing about injured athletes' experiences and expand sports injury resources beyond a psychological perspective (Wadey & Day, 2022). In doing so, researchers posit that it may help shift the focus away from locating the problem of injury solely 'within' the injured athlete and instead prompt consideration of how the broader socio-cultural contexts also create the conditions for athletes to think, feel, and behave around injury (Everard et al., 2023).

One form of inquiry and practice that can attend to both the personal and social-cultural aspects of athletes' injury experiences is narrative inquiry (Frank, 2010). Narrative inquiry posits that as humans we are storytellers, and so to make sense of our experiences and communicate our experiences to others we formulate and share stories, shaped from the narrative scripts available within our culture (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Aligned with this view, narratives are conceptualized as being both personal and social, in that they act as socio-cultural templates onto which individuals map their personal stories. In this sense, while an athlete may have agency in telling a personal story about their injury experiences, *how* they tell their story

will be dependent upon the socio-cultural narratives at their disposal (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Exploring athletes' stories of injury, therefore, can generate powerful insights into how socio-cultural contexts influence the ways in which athletes come to construct their psychological experiences of injury; this is because narratives are not just passive insights into people's lived experiences but are actors, in that they act on people, to shape "the terms in which they think, know, and perceive" (Frank, 2010, p. 48).

Given this performative capacity of narratives to 'do things' for individuals, and to scaffold the ways in which they may make sense of their experiences, sport psychology researchers have advocated for the use of narratives as resources to support injured athletes (Williams, 2020). Pointing to the potential applied value of narratives, researchers have theorized that identifying narratives of injury could work *for* injured athletes by expanding the narrative resources available to them and others to make sense of their experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). For example, Everard et al. (2021) identified six sport injury narratives, which highlighted the diverse ways in which elite athletes experience injury. In broadening the injury narrative repertoire, the authors suggested that these six narratives could be used to support injured athletes by offering them greater flexibility and opportunity in framing and reframing their injury experiences. In reducing the risk of injury, researchers have further postulated that narratives could work both *on* and *with* athletes, by raising awareness of the dangers embedded within certain injury storylines (e.g., playing through pain; Brock & Kleiber, 1994). Finally, as social actors, narratives have been theorized to help shape meanings of injury in ways that offer relational resistance to dominant cultural norms, by expanding socio-cultural perspectives of what it means to be an athlete and what it means to be injured (see McGannon et al., 2021). Given this potential value of narratives to inform professional practice by acting *on*, *for*, and *with* injured athletes, McGannon et al. (2021) suggested sharing injury narratives with athletes, coaches, and practitioners, and using them as entry points for understanding, reflection, and

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4 change. In line with this recommendation and given that our understanding of the applied value
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6 of sports injury narratives has been largely based on theoretical suggestions, generating
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8 empirical insights into how narratives can act to inform professional practice warrants further
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10 exploration.

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13 Generating empirical insights into narratives in action, and how they might ‘do things’
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15 *on, for, and with* athletes, coaches, and practitioners, has important implications in advancing
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17 our applied understanding of sports injury narratives. To expand, while sport psychology
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19 researchers have aimed to understand how athletes make sense of their injury experiences using
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21 narrative inquiry (e.g., Everard et al., 2021), and indicated how narratives could potentially ‘do
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23 things’ for injured athletes, narratives of sports injury have yet to be shared and discussed with
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25 athletes, coaches, and practitioners. Therefore, at present it is unknown whether sports injury
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27 narratives can work *for* injured athletes by enabling them to make sense of their experiences or
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29 implicate their physical and mental well-being as suggested (Williams, 2020). Moreover,
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31 current theorizing regarding the practical considerations of sports injury narratives has been
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33 researcher-led, as athletes, coaches, and practitioners’ perspectives of how narratives may
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35 influence athletes’ risk, response, and management of injury are unknown. Accordingly, there
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37 could be more expansive and alternative ways that sports injury narratives impact injured
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39 athletes. Given this limited research attention, coupled with concerns over the knowledge-
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41 practice gap within sport-injury psychology, whereby research is being created but is having
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43 limited uptake into practice (Leggat, 2020), understanding narratives in action and athletes,
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45 coaches, and practitioners’ perspectives of sports injury narratives is timely.

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48 The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the applied value of narratives for
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50 athletes, coaches, and practitioners. To this end, an existing evidence base which identified six
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52 narrative typologies (i.e., the most general storyline) underpinning the stories of elite injured
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54 track athletes was used (Everard et al., 2021). These six narratives (i.e., resilience, merry-go-
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round, longevity, pendulum, snowball, and more-to-me) available in a video format (see [here](#)) were shared and discussed with athletes, coaches, and practitioners to explore the following: (a) narratives in action (i.e., how they acted *on*, *for*, and *with* participants) and (b) the potential value of narratives in professional practice, by working *with* participants to consider their views on how injury narratives could work *on*, *for*, and *with* others in future practice.

Methods

Philosophical Underpinnings and Methodology

This study was grounded in a relativist ontology and a subjective epistemology (Smith & Deemer, 2000). Ontologically, we subscribe to the belief that no single, mind-independent, external reality exists; rather, reality is multiple, fluid, and mind-dependent. Aligned with this view, narratives are viewed as a form of social action, used to perform functions within social relationships (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). Epistemologically, we assume knowledge is subjective and constructed through interaction between the researcher and the participants. The first author's positioning therefore, in being a previous elite athlete with injury experiences will have shaped both the data co-construction and interpretations offered.

Aligned with the study's aims, we used narrative pedagogy to inform our methodology. Narrative pedagogy is an educational tool that involves sharing narratives with participants and then collaborating with participants by engaging in meaning-making, deep dialogue, and exchange to generate new understandings about the issue in contention (Goodson & Gill, 2011). Our rationale for using narrative pedagogy was threefold. Firstly, it aligns with our research philosophy in that it assumes that knowledge, experiences, and the self are constructed with one another through the reciprocal sharing of stories (Goodson & Gill, 2011). Secondly, it allowed for an exploration of narratives in action, that is, how narratives may act *on*, *for*, and *with* participants when shared and discussed within pedagogical encounters. For example, McMahon et al. (2018) used narrative pedagogy to educate parents on the experiences of abuse

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4 within sport and demonstrated how this process enhanced parents' capacity to identify
5 unacceptable coaching practices. Finally, by facilitating each other's narrative reflections, the
6 process of narrative pedagogy permits researchers to work *with* rather than *on* stakeholders
7 reciprocally and collaboratively.
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10 11 12 **Participants**

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14 Following university ethical board approval, purposive sampling was used to recruit
15 participants who were: (a) elite athletes (b) participated in track and field, (c) 18+ years old.
16 To explore the value of narratives for professional practice, elite track and field coaches and
17 elite practitioners that have worked within track and field and/or across other elite sports (i.e.,
18 boxing, golf, swimming) were also recruited. Elite participants were defined as those who
19 competed or supported athletes at World or Olympic level (Swann et al., 2015). However,
20 seven semi-elite athletes (i.e., competing in talent development programs or a second-tier
21 standard; Swann et al., 2015) were also included in the sample. In total, 69 participants were
22 recruited from Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The participants included
23 23 elite athletes ($n^{\text{female}}=13$) and 46 elite practitioners ($n^{\text{female}}=22$): 17 sport psychologists, 10
24 physiotherapists, five nutritionists, four strength and conditioning coaches, three lifestyle
25 advisors, three track and field coaches, two physiologists, and two performance directors
26 (combined years experiences = 377 years).
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42 **Data Collection**

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44 To capitalize on the collaborative nature of narrative pedagogy, focus groups were chosen as
45 the method of data collection. To account for *shared* experiences, mitigate the influence of
46 power dynamics, and reduce the potential implication of unwillingness to share information
47 for fear of criticism, homogenous focus groups were used for both elite coaches and athletes
48 (McMahon et al., 2018). Meanwhile, practitioners were organized in a heterogenous manner
49 (i.e., a mix of practitioners) to reflect real-world settings where practitioners act collectively to
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support injured athletes (Hess et al., 2019). Overall, 11 focus groups were conducted both online and in-person with 3 to 16 participants included in each ($m = 6.2$).

Procedure

Guided by narrative pedagogy (Goodson & Gill, 2011), the first author sought to establish an accepting and empathetic environment within focus groups by creating and building rapport with and among participants through the techniques outlined by previous pedagogy researchers (see McMahon et al., 2018). Moreover, taking into consideration that the first author assisted in co-constructing the video narratives, she tried to mitigate any possible reticence by participants to speak negatively about the video narratives, by reiterating to them that the aim of the focus groups was to gather rich, nuanced, and varied views. Indeed, rather than striving for consensus or seeking to determine whether the video narratives were valuable or not, the first author reinforced the notion that there was no right or wrong answers as the purpose of the focus groups was to learn from their experiences, especially given their diverse roles.

The process of narrative pedagogy comprised of three phases: narration (i.e., sharing the video narratives), collaboration (i.e., discussing the video narratives), and location (i.e., linking the narratives to their broader social and cultural context). Each of these phases was conducted for each of the six video narratives, (see [Storying Sport Injury Experiences — Psychology Of Sport Injury](#)), dynamically and reciprocally, with “a natural flow between each phase that involved an interplay of sharing, listening, and storytelling” (McMahon et al., 2018, p. 11). The first phase, *narration*, involved sharing a video narrative with the focus group. Next, the *collaboration* phase began, by posing questions about the video narrative in an open-ended manner, (e.g., “What are your impressions of the video?” “What impact, if any, did it have on you/could potentially have on others?”). To assist this process of collaboration, the first author drew upon her own experiences where appropriate, to help build rapport and contribute to the reciprocation

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4 and deep dialogue necessary for pedagogy (McMahon et al., 2018). Following this
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6 process of collaboration, the third phase, *location*, began, where supplementary material
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8 (i.e., PowerPoint presentation) was provided to help locate the narratives within their
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10 wider context. Considering this contextual information, participants were then invited to
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12 further discuss the video narratives, including the impact it had on them, and what they could
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14 'do' for others in the future. All focus groups watched all six video narratives and engaged in
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16 the process of narrative pedagogy for each one. Each focus group lasted between 100-120
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18 minutes (Total = 1248 minutes, $M = 113$ minutes). All focus groups were audio recorded and
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20 subsequently transcribed verbatim.
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22 23 **Data Analysis**

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25 A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used to analyze the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2020).
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27 An RTA was chosen as it allowed for the data to be analyzed inductively (e.g., athletes,
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29 coaches, and practitioners' responses) and deductively (e.g., drawing upon relevant theories to
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31 interpret the data; Frank, 2010). The process of doing an RTA was fluid and recursive and
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33 involved the first author initially familiarizing herself with the data by reading and re-reading
34
35 the transcripts and listening and re-listening to the audio recordings. Initial codes were then
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37 created which aimed to capture significant meanings of the dataset relevant to the research
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39 question (i.e., the applied value of the video narratives). In line with the narrative pedagogy
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41 process, the data that helped address this research question was represented across two
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43 temporal phases. For example, in some instances, the data was past or present-focused, and
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45 indicated how the video narratives acted *on*, *for*, or *with* participants within the pedagogical
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47 encounters (e.g., It made me feel less alone). In other instances, the data was future-focused
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49 and represented participants' views on what the video narratives and pedagogical discussions
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51 could 'do' for athletes, coaches, or practitioners moving forward (e.g., I think the video
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53 narratives could help athletes make sense of their injury experiences). As both temporal aspects
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of the data (i.e., past, and future-focused), were intertwined in participants' discussions throughout the transcripts, both temporal aspects were used to provide an overall account of the applied value of narratives. Several codes were formed in the initial stages including “narratives as a preventative tool” and “narratives as a frame of reference”. Codes were then clustered together to form overarching themes. For example, the codes including “narratives prepare athletes for injury set-backs”, “narratives as cheat sheets”, and “narratives as an early warning sign”, were collated and combined into an overarching theme named “forewarned is forearmed”. During this phase, to help frame the interpretations made, the authors drew upon narrative inquiry (Frank, 2010) and the sport injury psychology literature (e.g., Ronkainen & Ryba, 2017). Themes were then defined to ‘capture’ interpretative stories of the data and organized to showcase how video narratives and pedagogical discussions can ‘do things’ for athletes, coaches, and practitioners. The final stage involved editing the report, ensuring that the quotations selected were reflective of the interpretations made, and that the findings provided an overall rich, nuanced, and coherent account of the story.

Methodological Rigor

Guided by a relativist position for judging the rigor of qualitative research (Sparkes & Smith, 2009), several quality indicators were attended to. First, the rigor of the study was considered, by selecting information-rich participants, and using sufficient and abundant theoretical constructs to frame the interpretations made (Smith et al., 2014). Analytical rigor was further developed, by engaging in reflexive journaling (Finlay, 2002) where the first author reflected on the key tensions that emerged between herself and the participants and considered how her own assumptions (e.g., attraction towards certain theoretical constructs, tensions of interpreting quotations of participants from differing perspectives) influenced the interpretations formed.

Transparency of the study was attended to by engaging in critical friends' discussions where alternative interpretations of the data were sought (Smith et al., 2014). These critical friends' discussions also helped raise the first author's awareness of the possible limitations of the data collected. For example, these discussions prompted the first author to reflect upon how the data she collected mainly centred on how the video narratives supported athletes, or how they acted on participants in a constructive manner. Such reflections helped her consider how she could have probed more within focus groups regarding the potential dangers or constraints of the video narratives to help create a more nuanced dataset. To help balance the data presented which mainly supports the use of video narratives and pedagogy, we therefore aimed to provide some counterarguments throughout. Finally, the authors aimed to enhance the impact of the study by providing detailed and evocative descriptions of the participants accounts, and by posing questions to the reader as a means of provoking and engaging in dialogue on the applied value of injury narratives.

Results and Discussion

Five themes were identified: "Forewarned is Forearmed", "Building Blocks to Constructing Meaning(s)", "Fostering Interpersonal Connections", "A Common Language" and "Promoting Communal Responsibility".

Forewarned is Forearmed

This theme describes participants' views on how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could inform professional practice in the future by acting to support injured athletes' risk, response, and management of injury. To expand, participants highlighted how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could be used to prepare athletes for injury setbacks by forewarning them of possible 'trouble ahead' and by acting as 'route maps' to help navigate their future injury experiences. The necessity of this education was described by participants to be especially pertinent within the current cultural climate, whereby a "cherry-

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4 picking” of reality is often made visible, leaving athletes ill-equipped to navigate seemingly
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6 unforeseen circumstances. To illustrate one coach reported:
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8 I think if you could educate athletes early on these different perspectives, it might get
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10 them to understand that your journey is never this linear upward stairway, and if athletes
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12 could really come to understand that from a younger age, then they might be able to
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14 take the hits when they happen, because everyone still believes or expects to get that
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16 stairways to success, and something I’ve kind of learnt about this game, after years of
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18 it, is that you cannot predict it, you can’t say how things are going to go, and I think
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20 what's really important to all of this is the acceptance of things, and you know it's hard,
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22 because no one wants to say that you might never get to where you want to go, or that
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24 you might always be injured, or that you might fall out of love with the sport. But, I
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26 think athletes need to be made aware of these things, because it's like coaches and
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28 parents are always talking about success, success, success, naturally that's what we
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30 want, so we tend to avoid talking about injury, or the ‘bad stories’, but ultimately it is
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32 not going to be a negative talking to someone about injury, if anything it is much worse
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34 having not talked about it and then they are completely lost if it does happen, so I think
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36 it needs to be brought to the table *before* it even happens.
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40 As described by the above participant, injury can represent a loss in the destination or map that
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42 previously guided an athlete’s life (e.g., “stairways to success”) causing chaos and confusion
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44 (e.g., “completely lost if it does happen”). However, as illustrated above, by bringing injury
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46 “to the table before it even happens”, the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could
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48 support athletes' future well-being by protecting them against the possibility of narrative
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50 wreckage (Frank, 2013). Narrative wreckage occurs when the previous narrative or map that
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52 has guided an individual’s life path is broken, and in the absence of alternative narratives to
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54 regain coherence of their life story, they are left ‘shipwrecked’ by the storm (Frank, 2013).
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Building upon this example, participants alluded to three ways in which video narratives and pedagogical discussions could help prevent narrative wreckage (Frank, 2013). First, by raising athletes' awareness of the possibility of injury setbacks. For example, one athlete described, "injury was just something that I never even thought about before, and I definitely wasn't prepared for it. . . I think if I had seen this beforehand, I might have been better equipped to deal with it". Second, participants highlighted how the video narratives could help pre-emptively manage expectations around injury experiences (i.e., it is not always a smooth and linear process). Lastly, participants indicated how the video narratives could provide athletes with multiple 'cheat sheets', to help shape and guide their future narrative journey, as described by the following lifestyle advisor:

I think these video narratives could almost give the less experienced athletes a bit of a 'head start' in dealing with injury, because I imagine more experienced athletes and the athletes talking in the videos have almost stumbled upon their own narrative, because they've experienced a couple of injuries and they have had to figure out a narrative that helps them manage it, whereas, this is a bit of a cheat sheet for less experienced athletes because they've already got six different ones to pick from.

These "cheat sheets" proposed by the above participant are synonymous with the concept of narrative maps proposed by Pollner and Stein (1996), which refer to pre-representations that newcomers in an unfamiliar world get from stories told by those who have already been there. Narrative maps are said to provide "orientation, information, and advice" (Pollner & Stein, 1996 p. 201) to those at the threshold of a new social world and thus, as indicated by the above participant can offer athletes a "head start" in dealing with injury.

Aligned with this concept of narrative maps, researchers within sport psychology have indicated how narrative maps can shape future actions by directing individuals towards certain states and away from others (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2006). To this end, the video

narratives and pedagogical discussions were illustrated to direct athletes towards certain states (e.g., prioritizing their long-term health by ‘opening their eyes’ to the longevity narrative) and away from others (e.g., risk of injury by raising their awareness of the dangers inherent within certain storylines). Indeed, participants indicated how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could help direct athletes away from the risk of injury by acting as an “early warning system” that enables athletes and support networks to identify “red flags . . . a bit like a canary in the coalmines”, and thus become proactive in implementing injury prevention strategies. Moreover, by showing rather than telling athletes about the consequences of risk-taking behaviors the video narratives were illustrated to act *on* participants within the pedagogical encounters and incentivize future behavioral change, as one athlete exemplified:

Sometimes it’s hard, because I don’t want to admit to my coach that I’m rushing back to training or pushing through the pain . . . but watching that is sort of a confirmation that these people are saying ‘don’t do it’. So, it sort of gives me an incentive to be like if I know that I can’t stop myself from pushing through the pain, at least if I tell my coach then he will know and be inclined to tell me to stop. But it was also just good for making me realize, if you do push through the pain, you could be a few more years out or a few years down the line and it could happen again, so it gives me an incentive to stop myself from snowballing into something worse.

As illustrated in the above example, by forewarning athletes of the possible destinations that certain storylines (e.g., snowball narrative) may lead to (e.g., physical and psychological decline), the video narratives and pedagogical discussions can act *on* athletes to counter risk-taking behaviors by incentivizing them to create new maps (i.e., act on injury symptoms rather than ignore), that might lead to new possible destinations. Overall, this theme illustrates how exposing participants to injury narratives and encouraging discussion around them can work *on* athletes by teaching them and others what to pay attention to, as well as *for* athletes, by

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4 forewarning them of possible ‘trouble ahead’ and providing them with maps to help navigate
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6 this future terrain. That said, while the video narratives can help prepare athletes for injury
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8 setbacks and equip them with the resources for managing future injury experiences, as Pollner
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10 and Stein (1996) suggest, the full meaning of the map, and thus what lies ahead, only becomes
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12 evident once the novice embarks on the journey.
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14 ***Building Blocks to Constructing Meaning(s)***

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16 This theme relates to participants views on how the video narratives could work *for* injured
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18 athletes by acting as frames of reference that when shared and discussed can facilitate athletes
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20 in both making sense of their injury experiences and constructing their own injury story.
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22 Participants described the applied value of the narratives in enabling them to recognize,
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24 interpret, and understand their injury experiences, as surmised by the following athlete, “It
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26 helps put a title to what you are going through...and it just makes it make sense”. Further
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28 facilitating athletes in making sense of their experiences, athletes used the video narratives
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30 within the focus groups, as building blocks to either structure their own injury story or form a
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32 bricolage of their own experiences, as one athlete described: “I could resonate with different
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34 parts of each one, because each one was like ‘yeah that’s a bit of me’, ‘that’s a bit of me’, so it
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36 just helps you piece together your own story a bit more”. To this end, participants highlighted
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38 how the video narratives could be used in professional practice to help “get athletes started” in
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40 constructing their own injury story. The following sport psychologist described:
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44 Sometimes it’s getting started in making sense of the journey they have been on that is
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46 the hardest part. So, it’s fantastic that we have this resource that helps get them started.
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48 I almost see them as different suits to try on; so like ‘try that on see does it fit’, ‘yeah
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50 that’s kind of it, but not quite’, okay, ‘what about this other one’. . . and it’s almost the
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52 conversation that comes out of that . . . around the fitness of things, which can lead to
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54 the good stuff, and help them create their own bespoke injury meaning.
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4 As indicated by the above sport psychologist, the video narratives could serve as a
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6 prompt for athletes to begin to disclose and construct their own “bespoke injury meaning”. Part
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8 of facilitating this process also involves exposing athletes to narratives of injury that may have
9
10 been previously silenced or suppressed by dominant cultural norms. Individuals are theorized
11
12 to need alignment between what they are experiencing and the narrative scripts available within
13
14 their culture to help template that experience (Frank, 2006). Therefore, when dominant injury
15
16 narratives (e.g., resilience) suppress alternative injury storylines, it can create narrative tensions
17
18 that threaten sense of self, identity, and mental well-being (Williams, 2020). However, by
19
20 giving presence to these alternative injury meanings within the pedagogical encounters, it
21
22 generated the opportunity for athletes to gain coherence between what they are/were
23
24 experiencing and the narrative resources available to frame, interpret, and understand that
25
26 experience. For example, the following athlete described:
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29
30 I think the merry-go-round one, just having your experiences recognized is very
31
32 liberating, because it’s almost a relief to be like ‘okay this is something’, I’m feeling
33
34 something real, that other people experience too . . . and there’s a name on what I am
35
36 experiencing, which almost helps you externalize it a bit more.
37

38
39 Indeed, by giving presence to alternative injury meanings and communicating them as
40
41 part of a shared human experience, narratives can help normalize and validate athletes’ injury
42
43 experiences (e.g., “I’m feeling something real that others feel too”). Moreover, as indicated by
44
45 the above participant, by naming the type of story that the athlete may feel a part of it can help
46
47 externalize their injury story. This process of externalization could have important implications
48
49 for supporting athletes’ psychological well-being. For example, narrative therapists highlight
50
51 how by bringing awareness to the socio-cultural plotline or narrative that underpins an
52
53 individual’s story, it can help deconstruct a potentially problematic storyline, by enabling
54
55 individuals to observe the story as something separate from themselves, thus loosening the hold
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4 of the dominant plotline over the individual's life (Polkinghorne, 2004). Aligned with this
5
6 viewpoint, participants suggested how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could
7
8 inform professional practice in the future, by assisting athletes in gaining awareness, reflection,
9
10 and perspective on their own injury story, as one sport psychologist described:

11
12 I think it could be a good tool to use with an athlete, so I have an athlete now, whose
13
14 experiences are really similar to that merry-go-round narrative and this could work,
15
16 because, I could watch this video with her and be like 'how does this resonate with
17
18 you?' and then ask her now that you're watching this video what type of things would
19
20 you tell that athlete? I think that would present a great opportunity for her to recognize
21
22 some of her own experiences in someone else's, so it could be a useful tool to help take
23
24 the pressure off her experiences, talk about somebody else's, and then tie it back to her.
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26

27
28 As indicated by the above participant the video narratives could help support sport
29
30 psychology sessions by acting as a reflective tool that enables athletes to gain some perspective
31
32 on, and problematization of, their injury experiences, consistent with a narrative therapy
33
34 approach (Polkinghorne, 2004). Moreover, by equipping athletes with multiple injury
35
36 narratives, it could help expand athletes' possibilities by offering them alternative perspectives
37
38 to help re-frame their injury story. That said, participants cautioned against using these
39
40 narratives without context or discussion for fear that it may create undue pressure for athletes
41
42 to fit a certain type. For example, one sport psychologist described, "I would absolutely use
43
44 them, but my fear would be using them without context or support, I'd be afraid that athletes
45
46 would think, "I have to fit this one". I would want to work with the athlete to make sure they're
47
48 using them in the right way". Indeed, while the video narratives can facilitate athletes in making
49
50 sense of their injury experiences by enabling them to recognize, reflect upon, and construct
51
52 their own injury story; integrating the narratives in the "right way" alongside dialogue, context,
53
54 and discussion is imperative. In doing so, it can help sustain the capacity of narratives to act as
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4 interpretative resources that facilitate athletes in making sense of their injury experiences in
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6 flexible and bespoke, as opposed to prescriptive, ways.
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8 *Fostering Interpersonal Connections* 9

10 This theme relates to how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions can work *for*
11 athletes, coaches, and practitioners by creating connections between injured athletes
12 themselves and with their support network through dialogical exchange. For example, across
13 focus groups, athletes used video narratives to story their own experiences which resonated
14 with other athletes' experiences leading to further storying and so on. This cascading effect
15 helped build resonance between injured athletes' experiences thus helping to foster awareness
16 of how we as humans, are not bounded individuals but relational beings that exist relative to
17 one another (Gergen, 2011). This sense of connection and solidarity was illustrated by athlete
18 participants within the pedagogical encounters, and was described to help alleviate feelings of
19 isolation usually associated with injury, as indicated by the following athletes:
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31 John: I think I feel less alone, like when you get injured you feel quite alone but from
32 the stories that you showed us and from talking to everyone in here and how everyone
33 can relate to it, you just don't feel as alone with it, you're just less isolated with it.
34
35

36 Simon: Yeah, I agree with John there completely, like when you're injured you almost
37 feel like you are the only one who has ever gone through this or had these thoughts or
38 those kind of feelings, but from seeing these and chatting to everyone, it just shows that
39 everyone pretty much thinks the exact same things, so it gives a bit of perspective and
40 shows that we are all literally the same.
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48 Lee: I was just thinking the same as the two lads there, seeing people talk about their
49 injury, and the exact same thought process I would go through, like the panic and self-
50 doubt, and then thinking outside of running, like it just shows that everyone goes
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4 through the same kind of thought process when they are in the different stages, so yeah,
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6 it definitely makes you feel like you're not the only one.
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8
9 Alongside fostering connections, the above example further demonstrates how
10 connecting injured athletes to these broader injury narratives and each other through the
11 reciprocal sharing of stories, can animate a collective story that further normalizes their injury
12 experiences. Moreover, this collective story helps mitigate the 'stigma' of injury by posing
13 relational resistance to dominant cultural norms. For example, the above participants challenge
14 dominant masculine ideals that operate a 'code of silence' in relation to pain and injury by
15 beginning to disclose their thoughts, emotions, and feelings around injury. These collective
16 stories link individuals together into a shared consciousness, further strengthening the bond
17 between them, whilst also offering them the deference they deserve by relationally
18 counteracting this 'code of silence'.
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30 In addition to supporting injured athletes within pedagogical encounters, participants
31 expressed how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could be used in the future to
32 help foster connections between injured athletes and their supporting networks. By showcasing
33 'what it means to be injured', participants indicated how the video narratives could act to
34 strengthen interpersonal relationships, by moving support networks closer to understanding
35 injury from an athlete's perspective, and thus enhancing their capacity to both relate to and
36 respond to their injury experiences. The following athlete reported:
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44 I think it's good to just give family and coaches, and even other athletes who haven't
45 been injured some insight into what it's like to be injured because people don't really
46 understand it. Like, if I could show this to my family and be like 'look, it's not just me,
47 other people feel like this too', it might help them understand a bit more because I think
48 sometimes they just think I'm being dramatic . . . because they don't see the full picture
49 of what it's like to have these constant set-backs and have to pick yourself back up
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again, but also it's not just the injury, it's the being in pain, it's the isolation, it's how it makes you feel about your sport . . . so yeah, I think if they could watch this, they could get some insight into how deep it actually goes.

The capacity of these video narratives to create an understanding of “how deep it actually goes” can relate to their ability to cultivate empathetic and embodied reactions. As illustrated in previous research (Everard et al., 2023), video narratives are deemed to be evocative, and it is this capacity of the videos to amplify and induce affect that can ‘make us care about things’ by creating affective resonances in ways that go beyond articulated reading (Bates, 2014). For example, one physiotherapist reported:

My own feeling listening to that was just sadness. I think it (merry-go-round video) could bring a lot of awareness to coaches and other support staff too, because if they were to see that video, they could feel how rough or how sad an athlete can feel in that moment. I think it's really useful, because it mentioned a lack of empathy and how that feeds into the cycle, so I think if coaches and support staff could see this, then if an athlete is going through that, they might be able to understand and empathize a bit more.

As illustrated by the above participant, affective responses or feelings can assist individuals in moving beyond viewing injury experiences as abstract and conceptual to real and felt. Put another way, inducing affect can shift individuals from thinking about the stories presented to thinking *with* them (Frank, 2013). Thinking with stories involves joining with the story, adopting its logic and temporality, feeling its nuances and complexities, and experiencing it affecting one's own life, “the goal is empathy . . . not by internalizing the feelings of the other, but having resonance with them” (Frank, 2013, p.158). Such resonances and subsequent empathetic responses have important implications for injured athletes. For example, previous sports injury research (Ronkainen & Ryba, 2017) indicates how injury can pose a relational rupture between athletes and their support networks, as athletes report feeling as though their

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4 injury concerns would not be well received by their support network, or that their support
5
6 network cannot relate or empathize. In this sense, the findings in this study suggest that by
7
8 humanizing athletes' injury experiences and enhancing support networks resonance and
9
10 empathy for their experiences, the video narratives could help release athletes from the agony
11
12 of being "locked within unheard" and instead act to create what Frank (2004, p.104) describes
13
14 as a "space of consolation" between athletes and supporting networks.
15

16
17 Alongside this space of consolation, the video narratives were further indicated to
18
19 strengthen athlete-support network interpersonal ties by evoking dialogue around the shared
20
21 nature of certain injury experiences. In doing so, it acted to humanize not only injured athletes'
22
23 experiences but also those of their support networks, who are in their own right, wounded
24
25 storytellers (Frank, 2013). To illustrate, the following coach described:
26

27 I think that merry-go-round video almost mirrors what a coach goes through too, like
28
29 questioning yourself, and when an athlete is in that spiral, you almost go through that
30
31 yourself, because you don't know what to do, and as a coach, you are always thinking
32
33 what could I have done slightly differently, but it's so hard to get it right . . . and then
34
35 if they don't manage to get back from it, some do, some don't, you are also left with
36
37 that lifetime regret of 'what could have been'. I think they [video narratives] could be
38
39 a really useful tool to get athletes and coaches to talk around some of these experiences,
40
41 and I think anything that helps athletes and coaches talk and make sense of the 'rocky
42
43 road' that is any international career together, is going to be beneficial.
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46 As illustrated above, by acting as a conduit to help facilitate discussion around injury
47
48 experiences and appealing to the humanity in both athletes and supporting networks, these
49
50 video narratives can help foster a greater sense of togetherness by facilitating more communal
51
52 dialogue and understanding. In this sense, discussing these narratives within dyadic
53
54 relationships (e.g., athlete and support network) could act to dismantle the hierarchical
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perspective which assumes that coaches and practitioners either need to understand or have empathy *for* injured athletes. Instead, such encounters could help shift our understanding towards a community perspective whereby meaning making occurs alongside one another, and empathy is viewed as “a relationship in which each understands themselves as requiring completion by the other” (Frank, 2013, p. 233).

A Common Language

This theme relates to participants views on how the video narratives and pedagogical discussions can act to create a common language around injured athletes’ experiences, culminating in athletes and interdisciplinary practitioners working together in a more mutually beneficial manner. Alluding to this shared understanding, practitioners indicated how both the video narratives and pedagogical discussions could enhance their capacity to identify, listen, and respond to the *type* of story an athlete may feel a part of. By using these typologies as a listening guide, practitioners highlighted how the video narratives could sensitize them to the rhetoric of injured athletes, thus providing them with a frame of reference towards how an athlete may be approaching injury, as described by the following sport physiologist:

I think it’s useful for us as a team just to have some sort of context of how an athlete may be approaching an injury, especially as a peripheral team member, because I might meet an athlete for the first time who is injured for a conditioning session, and I might say like ‘*okay, we’re going to beast you on the bike now*’, but that could be the worst thing to say, because they may be the type to over-do it, or they may be trying to pursue the injury as an opportunity outside of sport, so not to be putting people into boxes, but it can help create an understanding of how an athlete may be dealing with an injury, so we make sure we’re not reinforcing the wrong narrative or putting them into a spiral.

As indicated by the above participant, the pedagogical potential of the video narratives to cultivate “some understanding of how an athlete may be approaching injury” could have

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4 important implications in supporting injured athletes by helping to mitigate some of the
5
6 miscommunications between injured athletes and support networks and thus unify them
7
8 towards a common goal. Such miscommunications and misunderstandings were indicated to
9
10 be rife within organizational settings, as participants hinted at how coaches and athletes can
11
12 often draw upon storylines that differ from those espoused by practitioners. The following
13
14 physiotherapist described:
15

16
17 Educating people about their bodies in theory is really easy, so you can explain to them
18
19 in theory, what's going on and why the injury is not getting better . . . but then you're
20
21 up against culture within sport, culture within their family, culture within who they are,
22
23 where they live, and what they want to believe . . . so, if you're not speaking in the
24
25 language that they understand or can accept, then it's just like 'rubbish' kind of stuff,
26
27 they only hear not what they want to hear, but what they *can* hear.
28

29
30 As Frank (2010, p. 57) depicts, when two inner libraries do not overlap, "the dialogue of the
31
32 deaf" arises. Contextualizing this insight to the above example, when the collection of stories
33
34 that an athlete and coach have access to does not overlap with the narratives articulated by the
35
36 practitioners, a rift in understanding emerges. However, the video narratives and pedagogical
37
38 discussions could help bridge this gap, firstly by broadening athletes, coaches, and
39
40 practitioners' injury narrative repertoire and thereby stretching their narrative habitus to
41
42 becoming receptive to hearing alternative perspectives. Second, as "language shapes the whole
43
44 inheritance of understanding and meaning" (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p.80), these video
45
46 narratives could enhance practitioners' rhetoric for both listening and responding to injured
47
48 athletes, thus expanding the granularity of communication available to them, to engage athletes
49
50 in mutual dialogue.
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52
53 This capacity of the video narratives and pedagogical discussions to create a common
54
55 language around athletes' injury experiences, was indicated to give way to not only improved
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exchanges within interpersonal relationships (i.e., between athletes and coaches, athletes and practitioners) but help to promote a more interdisciplinary approach to sport injury management, by enabling practitioners to work more synergistically to support injured athletes (Hess et al., 2019). To exemplify, the following physiotherapist suggested:

I think these videos are good at creating conversations within us as a team, in terms of how we can get everyone involved in injury management, because while I may be the main port of call, everyone has the opportunity to create a positive impact, and I think we could definitely improve in that area, like linking in with X (lifestyle manager) on how we can create opportunities from the injury, like that ‘more to me’ perspective, or linking in with the physiologists and S and C [strength and conditioning] guys in terms of how we can manage the conditioning side of things on that ‘resilience narrative’, so that they don’t overdo it, and then marrying up the physiotherapy and psychology sessions, so I think these discussions just help us to think about how can we do more of that so that we are all working together to support the athlete.

The potential of the video narratives to help promote a more interdisciplinary approach to sports injury management by “creating conversations within (the) team” to ensure they are “all working together to support the athlete”, underscores the applied value of the video narratives and pedagogical discussions in working *for* injured athletes and practitioners. While sporting institutions commonly adopt a multidisciplinary perspective with practitioners working within their respective silos, interdisciplinary perspectives help cross boundaries between disciplines, and offer a collaborative approach with the common goal of supporting the injured athlete (Hees et al., 2019). Notwithstanding the complexities and nuances of integrating practitioners from diverse backgrounds to work together in a collaborative manner, the synergy embedded within interdisciplinary perspectives enables practitioners to offer more than each individually and separately could ever accomplish (Hees et al., 2019). Overall, this

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4 theme demonstrates how by creating a common language around injured athletes' experiences,
5
6 the video narratives when shared and discussed have important applied implications in
7
8 promoting more synergistic approaches to injury management.
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10 ***Promoting Communal Responsibility***

11
12 This theme depicts how the video narratives were illustrated to work *with* and *on* participants
13
14 within focus groups, by guiding their interpretation of how injury can be socially and culturally
15
16 constructed and prompting reflection on the broader duty of care provided to injured athletes.
17
18 To illustrate, the following physiotherapist describes how the video narratives can work *with*
19
20 practitioners to raise their awareness of how the broader socio-cultural contexts create the
21
22 conditions for athletes to think, feel, and behave around injury:
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24

25 I think what really came out of that (i.e., merry-go-round video) was that injured athlete
26
27 tag and what that does for the athlete. I think we are all guilty of creating that identity .
28
29 . . it's so easy for other athletes to joke like 'oh you're best mates with the physio, or
30
31 here you are again, back in the physio room', but equally, we talk about athletes quite
32
33 openly, and there is a storyline of 'so and so is still injured', so I think we could be
34
35 better, we could be more sensitive in terms of the language we use around injury, who
36
37 we say it in front of, and maybe how we say to an athlete, because we are almost
38
39 compounding that storyline of like 'your still injured then', which is feeding into all
40
41 those other thoughts the athlete is having around injury.
42
43

44 As indicated by the above participant, socio-cultural contexts and conversations can restrict the
45
46 opportunities available for athletes to make sense of their injury experiences by reinforcing
47
48 certain archetypes (i.e., the injured athlete). Dialogue that emerged in response to the video
49
50 narratives further indicated how the structural properties of athletes funding, sponsorship, or
51
52 scholarship obligations can often preclude athletes from engaging in alternative injury
53
54 perspectives, by scaffolding their criteria around the 'win at all costs' mentality espoused by
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4 the performance narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Moreover, using the video narratives as
5
6 a reference point, participants highlighted contextual examples of how the media and
7
8 institutions may operate in a symbiotic manner to further shape how athletes construct and
9
10 make sense of their own injury story, as one athlete described:

11
12 I guess I would have had a lot of media and PR training, and one of the things they
13
14 always told us was to talk about how we were going to bounce back and use the injury
15
16 to work harder in other ways, so I think they encouraged us within the institution to put
17
18 that story (i.e., resilience) out there to the media, but I definitely didn't feel like that,
19
20 and that wasn't my narrative anyway.
21
22

23 Finally, the video narratives worked *with* participants within pedagogical encounters to
24
25 help raise their awareness of the systemic nature of certain storylines (i.e., resilience, snowball),
26
27 and how they act as a form of narrative induction within their sporting institutions. Narrative
28
29 induction refers to "the social work that an institution performs to make one person's story
30
31 everyone's story, relevant to everyone and available to everyone as a role model" (Frank, 2010,
32
33 p. 61). By guiding their interpretation of how certain storylines create this socially shared frame
34
35 of reference, participants were able to further reflect upon how these narratives shape and
36
37 infuse how injury is managed, experienced, and expressed within their cultural climate, and the
38
39 challenges that this may present for athletes. One sport psychologist described:
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41

42 I'm just thinking now that we've probably got a program story that leans heavily
43
44 towards the resilience narrative that injury is just part and parcel, you get injured, and
45
46 you get on with it. Work hard and come back stronger, because our PD [performance
47
48 director], he was an athlete, and had injuries but was like I hurt for a bit, and I got on
49
50 with it, because you're an athlete, you're going to hurt. Even that snowball one, we
51
52 adapt the programme to fit that story because modified training is a huge part of our
53
54 programme, so there is an element where we create the program around the idea that
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4 it's okay to train not 100%. So then, are we making it worse, in that, are people
5 comfortable to go I'm not sure if I am okay to train. I would almost go as far to say that
6 sometimes we reward that behavior of like, 'he just cracks on, no matter what like he
7 will go and compete anywhere anytime', that is seen as like a really resilient athlete,
8 and you know I'm not sure at times if that's the best narrative for everyone.
9

10
11 Collectively, the above examples point to how the video narratives and pedagogical
12 discussions worked *with* participants to frame their understanding of how injury is socially and
13 culturally constructed. In doing so, these video narratives and pedagogical discussions help
14 prick the social consciousness of injury by cultivating an awareness of how broader
15 sociocultural factors influence and implicate athletes' risk, response, and management of injury
16 (i.e., the problem is not 'just' located within injured athletes; Wadey & Day, 2022). Moreover,
17 by using the video narratives as reference points, the above conversations helped bring to the
18 fore how certain dominant perspectives of injury (e.g., resilience, performance) are not 'how
19 injury is', but rather cultural scripts that are being perpetuated by institutions and sporting
20 cultures. Given that dominant narratives often operate below awareness, and it is this latent
21 quality that gives them their power (Nelson, 2001), generating such insights, help problematize
22 dominant narratives and thus create space for more inclusive and expansive ways of supporting
23 injured athletes to emerge.
24
25

26
27 This problematization of dominant narratives (i.e., resilience, performance), was further
28 evidenced as participants' responses to the video narratives within pedagogical encounters
29 acted to animate collective storylines that foregrounded the 'inconvenient facts' of these
30 dominant perspectives. According to Nelson (2001, p.167), inconvenient facts are those
31 dominant narratives "run roughshod over . . . as they call the narrative's credibility into
32 question". These inconvenient facts included participants' descriptions of how the totalizing
33 nature of dominant injury perspectives (i.e., resilience, performance), can create the scaffolding
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4 within which all other injury experiences are to be expressed, managed, and understood. In
5
6 doing so, participants indicated how these dominant perspectives can create stigmatization,
7
8 misunderstandings, and limit support for athletes whose injury experiences may differ from
9
10 these dominant cultural scripts, as one sport psychologist outlined:
11

12
13 I think because our narrative is just ‘work hard’ like just ‘pure graft’, work hard and it
14
15 will be fine, when it starts to not look like that, the coaches just can’t understand it, so
16
17 then they just go with, ‘oh they’ve not been doing the rehab properly’, or ‘they’ve
18
19 sacked it off’, because they need something tangible to be able to explain it.
20

21
22 The above examples demonstrate how dispersing these video narratives within
23
24 pedagogical settings helps create and shape storylines that pose resistance to dominant cultural
25
26 norms by collectively articulating their “inconvenient facts” (Nelson, 2001, p.167). Such
27
28 inconvenient facts can help promote a more critical consideration of dominant perspectives and
29
30 thus prompt consideration of the broader duty of care provided to injured athletes. For example,
31
32 within the pedagogical encounters, conversations around these inconvenient facts were
33
34 illustrated to act *on* practitioners as they began to consider *their* role in shaping an athlete’s
35
36 injury experiences and reflect how they may be championing certain storylines and socializing
37
38 athletes to them in ways that are potentially harmful to them, as illustrated by the following
39
40 sport psychologist:
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42
43 I think these narratives kind of hold the mirror up to us as a team as well, in terms of
44
45 how we manage things. I think I am the narratives that we use within the institution
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47 because we have adopted these at times like the snowball and pushing through things,
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49 so it's a good one for us to reflect on as well, what are the narratives that we are using,
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51 because it's got to be the right thing for somebody to get them to engage in the way that
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53 we want them to.
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4 The above statement demonstrates how the video narratives and pedagogical
5
6 discussions worked *on* participants by raising their awareness of how, as practitioners, they
7
8 may be acting as “artificial persons” who speak on behalf of institutional procedures and
9
10 organizational rules (Frank, 2004, p.127), as exemplified in the above participant’s statement,
11
12 “I am the narratives that we use within the institution”. This awareness can have important
13
14 applied implications as it can encourage practitioners to think critically of the implications of
15
16 the narratives of injury they promote, rather than being complicit in a system that is ultimately
17
18 damaging to an athlete’s long-term health and psychological well-being. By generating this
19
20 awareness within pedagogical encounters, the video narratives and pedagogical discussions
21
22 demonstrate their applied value for injured athletes, as they help shift the perception of injury
23
24 beyond a neoliberal health agenda, whereby the athlete is seen as solely responsible for the
25
26 psychological management of injury, towards a more communal approach. Overall, by working
27
28 both *with* and *on* participants, the video narratives and pedagogical discussions helped ‘prick’
29
30 the wider consciousness and promote a broader duty of care for injured athletes.
31
32

33 34 **Conclusion**

35
36 By exploring narratives in action, alongside multiple stakeholders’ perspectives of the video
37
38 narratives, this original study has extended our empirical understanding of how injury
39
40 narratives can ‘do things’ *on*, *for*, and *with* athletes, coaches, and practitioners when dispersed
41
42 and shared within pedagogical encounters. Collectively, these findings highlight the applied
43
44 value of video narratives and pedagogical activities in supporting injured athletes personally,
45
46 socially, and culturally. For example, the video narratives and pedagogical discussions were
47
48 illustrated to work *for* athletes, coaches, and practitioners by facilitating them in making sense
49
50 of athletes’ injury experiences and enhancing interpersonal relationships, *on* athletes by
51
52 mitigating feelings of isolation around injury and prompting future behavioral change, and *with*
53
54 athletes, coaches, and practitioners by guiding their interpretation of how injury is socially and
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4 culturally constructed and thus promoting greater communal responsibility. By illustrating the
5
6 applied value of the video narratives, this study contributes towards bridging the knowledge-
7
8 practice gap (Leggat, 2020).
9

10
11 Alongside bridging the knowledge-practice gap, this study also extends the practical
12
13 lens, by providing an illustrative example of a novel and alternative injury management
14
15 resource, which diversifies from the predominant cognitive-based interventions within sport
16
17 injury psychology. The findings presented represent a shift away from focusing solely on the
18
19 cognitive processes of athletes and instead illustrate how targeting the socio-cultural context
20
21 through broadening injury discourses (e.g., “building blocks to constructing meaning”) and
22
23 facilitating interpersonal dialogue (e.g., “fostering interpersonal connections”) can shape the
24
25 conditions to help support athletes’ thoughts, feelings, and emotions in relation to injury. By
26
27 extending the analytical gaze beyond the injured athletes, the findings also help open up new
28
29 lines of enquiry for supporting injured athletes in ways that challenge the neoliberal view that
30
31 athletes should be solely responsible for their injury experiences. For example, by encouraging
32
33 practitioners to reflect upon how they may be championing discourses on behalf of the
34
35 institution that are harmful for athletes (see “promoting communal responsibility”), the video
36
37 narratives and pedagogical discussions may prompt practitioners to shift from being ‘cultural
38
39 allies’ of leadership to ‘cultural architects’ who are involved in the design and execution of
40
41 cultural change (McDougall et al., 2020). Given that sport psychologists now have increasing
42
43 opportunities to work in a broader organizational role with diverse groups and personnel from
44
45 across the sports organization (see Wagstaff, 2019), they are ideally positioned to help ensure
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47 that alternative and marginalized injury viewpoints are heard by educating others within the
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49 organization on these perspectives and ensuring that diverse ways of experiencing injury are
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51 catered for within injury service provision. Moreover, the video narratives when dispersed in
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53 narrative pedagogy settings were illustrated to create and shape collective storylines that pose
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4 resistance to dominant narratives by articulating the ‘inconvenient facts’ of such perspectives
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6 (Nelson, 2001). Such collective storylines could be harnessed to ‘ambush’ individuals in
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8 positions of leadership who perpetuate the exclusivity of dominant perspectives to help place
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10 taken-for-granted assumptions into flux and create a space for alternative and multiple
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12 perspectives to emerge. Considering this potential opportunity for creating cultural change,
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14 future research may look towards conducting pedagogical discussions around diverse injury
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16 narratives in an ongoing way with practitioners and consider how researchers could work co-
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18 productively with practitioners to support them in integrating diverse perspectives of injury
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20 into practice.
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23 In line with the future integration of these diverse injury perspectives into practice, the
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25 challenges and tensions that arose or potentially could arise from sharing these diverse
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27 perspectives with athletes, coaches, and practitioners warrant consideration. For example,
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29 although the narratives were indicated to help prepare athletes for the possibility of future
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31 injury setbacks (i.e., forewarned is forearmed), this raised awareness also carries within it the
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33 risk of making athletes fearful about the potential of future injury. In doing so, it could lead to
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35 a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby athletes have heightened levels of anxiety concerning injury
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37 risk, which in turn increases their possibility of being injured (see Willaims & Andersen, 1998).
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39 Therefore, the benefits of using these narratives as part of an injury prevention/education
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41 programme must be weighed against these possible risks. Moreover, narrative typologies do
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43 risk placing athletes’ injury experiences into ‘boxes’ and circumscribing athletes to one viable
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45 way of being. In line with practitioners' concerns over the pressure that athletes may feel to
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47 adhere to a certain narrative type, integrating these narratives into practice requires dialogue
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49 and a relative foregrounding of the key tenets of narrative inquiry (Frank, 2010). For example,
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51 it is important to reinforce the notion that these narratives are not intended to be prescriptive in
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4 nature, but rather offer athletes, coaches, and practitioners, a multiplicity of resources to help
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6 facilitate athletes in constructing and reconstructing their injury story flexibly and creatively.
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9 To promote this notion of multiplicity and inclusivity, the organizational culture also
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11 needs to be one which accommodates ambiguity and conflicting views. However, sporting
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13 organizations are often purported to operate from a consensus culture, whereby culture is
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15 defined as that which is “shared, consistent and clear, the glue that holds people together so
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17 they can achieve success” (MacDougall et al., 2020, p.2). To this end, dominant narratives
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19 (e.g., resilience, performance) such as those proposed by practitioners within this study (see
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21 promoting communal responsibility), will often act as the socially shared frame of reference
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23 for the organization that defines who they are, how they deal with setbacks, and how they want
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25 to achieve success. Against this backdrop, exposing elite sporting organizations to the notion
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27 that there is no single monolithic organizational narrative for injury, but rather a multiplicity
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29 of perspectives that are imbued with paradoxes, contradictions, and inherent tensions, is no
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31 easy feat. Aligned with challenges of promoting a culture where ambiguity is at the core, when
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33 sharing and discussing narratives with participants, several practitioners reported needing more
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35 “concrete follow-up actions” and specific guidelines to help implement these narratives into
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37 practice. Herein lie important questions and inherent tensions for future narrative researchers
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39 to consider and problematize. For example, how can we integrate a narrative approach into
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41 sporting environments, when there are no “specifiable marching orders for action”, which runs
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43 counter-intuitive to the ‘sound scientific principles’ often guiding and shaping the conduct
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45 within these very sporting institutions (Gergen & Gergen, 2006, p. 119)? Indeed, while we
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47 would argue that narratives have much to offer practitioners in dealing with the ambiguous
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49 nature of injury and elite sport, by equipping them with flexible resources that can enable them
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51 to hear, critically reflect upon, and think with athletes’ injury stories, these inherent tensions
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53 (e.g., the need for concrete follow-up actions) remain unpacked. With these closing points in
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4 mind, this study has offered a modest contribution towards extending our empirical
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6 understanding of the applied value of injury narratives in working *on, for,* and *with* athletes,
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8 coaches, and practitioners. In doing so, this study opens up new ways of supporting injured
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10 athletes, and creates new questions, challenges, and debates, for future research to consider.
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14
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16
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18

19
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