

## Narrative Identity Constructs and Effects on Performance in Sport Field

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### Abstract

Exposing to the numerous and challenging changes and pressures in the contemporary society (new technologies, socio-demographic processes, financial and economic crisis, organisational reshaping, societal values changes, etc.) significantly affects the way to live of individuals, who need to completely rethink and reshape their way to behave, for being able to face many difficulties, especially for expressing themselves, keeping their own identity also with respect of their societal and cultural values. It is not easy to keep and express our own identity into a contemporary society characterised by high pluralism and multiculturalism, where, particularly the new generations need to feel accepted by the world and do not often follow their real way to be and behave. For this reason, narrative identity constructs have been receiving increasing attention by scholars and practitioners trying to search for and identify the most effective ways for individuals in any settings to describe themselves, achieving the best performance and high levels of well-being in everyday life. In the sport setting, the debate on this issue is still open with much more focus on the effects of narrative identity constructs on the athletes' performance. This explorative study, adopting a qualitative methodology and using a manual content analysis technique, investigates narrative identity as a possible effective path for individuals to face their everyday life challenges, trying to keep their strong values and their own way to be and behave. The purpose is to analyse the identity issue through the narrative identity constructs with direct and indirect connections to the sport setting, mostly athletes' performance, investigating the relationship between specific topics (presence/absence of purpose and meaning, positive/negative self-view, positive/negative relationships) for athletes involved in sports competitions outlining their way to describe and talk about themselves. The results of this study outline that individual characteristics

significantly affect the athletes' storytelling style and sports performance. These findings can support coaches and personal trainers, as well as athletes, to identify and implement effective practices for improving their narrative identity, such as effective training and educational programs for their self-awareness.

## 1. Introduction

In the last decades, contemporary society completely changed and has been still changing in terms of priorities, values and organisational and behavioural models. We observe and need to face new challenges which assume forms and implications very hard to manage and to afford. For instance, the development, adoption and spread of new technologies completely reshaped the meaning of work division and coordination, as well as the way to communicate where the borders between humans within and outside organisations have become very flexible, almost absent (Adisa *et al.*, 2017; Guzman and Lewis, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, financial and economic crisis and deep global socio-demographic processes contribute remarkably to define new and very challenging ways to live with different societal and cultural values, where it is very difficult to keep our own thoughts and behavioural models (Leiser *et al.*, 2016; Gallie, 2019; Trinh *et al.*, 2020).

In this scenario briefly described, each individual should feel lost because he/she cannot really express him/herself. It is very challenging for each individual to keep his/her identity in contemporary society where we talk about pluralism, and there are many pressures addressed to be global, almost overcoming the individual identities. It's like the overall society pushes for individuals to tend to homologate themselves by losing their own characteristics and specificities of their identity respecting the new societal system, where it is relevant how each individual appears to others and how he/she describes him/herself and respects the common and most considered successful models (Basu and Kumar, 2020; Ferreri, 2020).

This conceptual study aims to investigate narrative identity constructs, consisting of the use of storytelling by individuals about their past for being able to face the challenging future having the right consideration of themselves. Specifically, this explorative study, adopting a qualitative methodology and using content analysis, provides a reading of the phenomenon "narrative identity" within one specific field, that is sport setting. The sports context has been chosen for two main reasons. First, because of the significant increase and relevance of sports business in the last decades where we observe a very interesting growth in terms of volumes of revenues for sports organisations and athletes in many sports disciplines, as well as, increasing attention paid to this field by scholars and practitioners, also to search for more effective solutions able to improve the performance (Den Hartigh *et al.*, 2018; Rizvandi *et al.*, 2019; Pitts and Zhang, 2020). Second, sport plays a crucial role as a vehicle for promoting and stimulating social inclusion for everyone, especially people with disability, where individuals can really express themselves and feel to be part of a group (Haudenhuyse, 2017; Peachey *et al.*, 2019; Cunningham *et al.*, 2020).

Specifically, this study investigates the identity issue through the narrative identity constructs with direct and indirect connections to the sport setting, mostly athletes' performance. Indeed, the relationship between specific topics (presence/absence of purpose and meaning, positive/negative self-view, positive/negative relationships) for athletes involved in sports competitions is investigated, outlining their way to describe and talk about

themselves. Otherwise, additional demands could predispose athletes to a much greater risk of having mental health issues like depression when they are unable to tackle any of the challenges, with symptoms that include hopelessness, irritability, emptiness, despair, chronic fatigue, denial, lack of acceptance by peers, isolation, low self-esteem, anxiety, pain, and regret among others (Etzel, 2006; Sarokhani *et al.*, 2013). Scholars have indicated that depression is a major mental health issue among athletes that lose purpose and meaning, develop negative self-view and relationships (Storch *et al.* 2002; Rao and Hong 2016). Female athletes appear to exhibit a greater severity of depressive symptoms compared to male athletes (Storch *et al.*, 2002; Yang *et al.*, 2007).

Hence, this study provides a summary of narrative identity constructs through the storytelling of sports athletes, trying to outline how much it is important for them the way they use in talking about them and their difficulties in facing any difficulties related to their everyday life and sport setting, taking into account their habits and practices to live and behave (defining goals or meaning, positively or negatively considering themselves, establishing useful or not useful relationships). Although this study presents an exploratory nature, it should contribute to the existing literature on the topic providing a different reading of the phenomenon in the sport context, trying to find out if and how some features play a crucial role and can significantly impact on athletes' narrative identity and their performance.

## 2. Narrative identity: a literature review

Narrative identity is a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose (McAdams and McLean, 2013: 233).

Recent research focuses on two main characteristics of narrative identity: psychological adaptation mechanisms, that allow the stories to act as an instrument of balance or personal psycho-physical imbalance (Bauer *et al.*, 2005; Fivush *et al.*, 2006; McLean and Pratt, 2006; King and Hicks, 2007; McLean *et al.*, 2007), and development of personal's story during the different phases of the life through dialogues with parents, friends, colleagues, and, in general, caregivers (Habermas and De Silveira, 2008; Pasupathi and Hoyt, 2010; Syed and Azmitia, 2010; McLean and Pasupathi, 2011; Adler, 2012; McAdams and McLean, 2013).

In particular, psychological adaptation consists of how individuals make narrative sense of suffering in their lives, enacting personal agency, the degree to which individuals describe themselves as able to affect change in their life or in the environment by re-storytelling a successful key narrative theme of their existences. To become an adult strengthened and enhanced from negative life experiences, an individual generally follows a two-step process (Pals, 2006). In the first phase, people deeply, longingly and hardly explore the negative experience, thinking in detailed and thoughtful accounts of loss and struggle in their lives (child illness, divorce, work problems, severe diseases). People think about how they felt like, articulating, elaborating and processing the turning points, and where the event may lead to in their lives. In the second step, individuals try to position negative event in their overall life story and to engage in a positive perception of the problem as an opportunity to change positively and better manage personal life. The first step should be related to an increase in

personal growth, awareness, identity and psychological maturity, and the second one should be linked to peacefulness and happiness (Bauer *et al.*, 2005; McLean and Pratt, 2006; King and Hicks, 2007; Syed and Azmitia, 2010).

Psycho-physical well-being and successful private, social and job performance of people also depend on the development process of narrative identities (McAdams and McLean, 2013). During the last century, according to the classical theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963), the most authors on the matter stated that individuals develop the abilities to engage in the complex process of narrating stories about the self since the late-adolescent and early-adult years, partly as a function of biological maturation of the frontal lobes of formal operational thinking, and partly of societal expectations regarding identity, that let individuals ask themselves existential questions, such as: 'Who am I? How did I come to be? Where is my life going?' (McAdams, 1985; Habermas and Bluck, 2000). Otherwise, recent research outlined that ability to construct, internalise, and argue with causal coherence (a convincing account of how early events cause later events) and thematic coherence (the derivation of organising themes or trends in a full life) in narrative identity construction emerges, before adolescence, in late childhood according to a sociocultural model, which highlights that a narrative identity builds slowly over time as people tell stories about their experiences to and with others (McLean *et al.*, 2007; Habermas and De Silveira, 2008).

From a quantitative analysis perspective, self-narrative coherence of individuals' self-storied accounts showed a statistically significant relationship to psychological well-being, in line with narrative psychologists, who argue that mental well-being is surely related to, and, maybe, the result of, a well-integrated and coherent self-storied account (Baerger and McAdams, 1999).

The ability to construct a coherent account of personal experience is the result of progressive and adaptive psychological adjustment cuts during life, in a reflective and predictive manner. Coherent accounts of identity present significant relations with three psychological well-being components: purpose and meaning, positive self-view, positive relationships. Identity content of each narrative represents the moderating variable between the narrative coherence of personally significant autobiographical memories and psychological well-being (Waters and Fivush, 2015).

Waters and Fivush (2015) collected two autobiographical narratives of personally significant events from 103 undergraduate students and coded them for coherence and identity content. Two additional narratives about generic/recurring events were also collected and coded for coherence. They confirmed the prediction that constructing coherent self-narratives is related to psychological well-being. Moreover, they stated that this relation was moderated by the autobiographical narratives' relevance to identity (unique events are a critical feature of identity construction), after testing the moderation role for narrative ability more generally, in terms of coherence of generic and recurring events. On the contrary, failure in developing this kind of coherent account of identity since adolescent and emerging adulthood periods emerge as the result of early and progressive loss of a sense, purpose and meaning in life, a feeling of helplessness, and loss of coherence in self-narrative produce the inability or failure to develop positive intimate relationships (e.g., Erikson, 1950, 1968; McAdams, 1993, 1995, 1996).

Over time (McAdams and McLean, 2013: 235; see also McLean *et al.*, 2007),

[...] selves create stories, which in turn create selves [...]. Through repeated interactions with others, stories about personal experiences are processed, edited, reinterpreted, retold, and subjected to a range of social and discursive influences, as the storyteller gradually develops a broader and more integrative narrative identity.

Conversations with parents, who use an elaborated dialogical style, focused on causes and explanations underscoring emotional evaluations of past events about personal events, represent statistically a critical issue for the development of constructive or disrupted narrative and meaning-making skills in children (Fivush *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, during the life, attentive and responsive listeners enhance tellers to narrate more personally elaborated stories, in spite of distracted listeners (Pasupathi and Hoyt, 2010): attentive listening helps to promote the development of narrative identity, not the process to tell just to entertain themselves. Finally, in a longitudinal perspective of positive evolution of own narrative identity, the development process is positively affected by the level of deep of the relationships and the romantic characteristics of the partners (McAdams and McLean, 2013: 235; see also McLean and Pasupathi, 2011):

[...] more romantic partners agreed on the meaning of a shared memory, the more likely the teller was to retain that meaning over time. Therefore, when important people in a person's life agree with his or her interpretation of a personal story, he or she is likely to hold on to that story and to incorporate it into his or her more general understanding of who he or she is and how he or she came to be.

Self-narrative studies significantly emerge as a relevant concept in sports field literature, and, in particular, in analysing athletic identity after acquiring a physical disability (Sparkes and Smith, 2002; Perrier *et al.*, 2014).

For the development and expansion of the social model of disability to incorporate a sociology of body and impairment, Hughes and Paterson (1997) highlighted that most research on the inside-out perspectives that features storytelling process of people with disabilities, when they talk about their bodies, adopt an interactionist and self-narrative identity approach. They noted that even though this perspective has offered descriptions of the discrimination faced by people with disabilities, much research has always to be done to identify the conditions that produce these experiences, bypassing the essential ambiguity of human embodiment as personal and impersonal, objective and subjective, social and natural, to effectively incorporate the complexities of being disabled by locating impairment as a culturally informed and meaningful quality of existence (Hughes and Paterson, 1997: 335):

Disability is experienced in, on and through the body, just as impairment is experienced in terms of the personal and cultural narratives that help to constitute its meaning [...]. Most importantly, the (impaired) body is not just experienced: It is also the very basis of experience. [...] Disability is, therefore, experienced from the perspective of impairment. One's body is one's window on the world.

According to Marks (1999: 611), "disability does not reside in a particular body or environment, but rather is an embodied relationship and narratives". Any research of impairment should need to include a consideration of unconscious experiences of disability

and the positive or negative role of conscious narrative accounts. The socially oppressive narrative about disablism can be identified as one for the main cause of growing unconscious defences used by people with disabilities: to face social oppression narrative pressures they end to develop progressive invalidating psychological forms of internalised oppression. Marks (1999) stated that it is important to examine the relationship which injured people have with others, but also their effects on the relationships they have with themselves.

In a socio-cultural and subjective perspective, self-narrative identity literature can contribute to a cultural understanding of disability and sport. How athletes with disabilities are described within the media (stories, visual images, etc.), and how much time is dedicated to adapt sport, which could affect athletic self-narrative development identity (Perrier *et al.*, 2014).

Pappous *et al.* (2011) analysed the media coverage of three consecutive summer Paralympic Games, and media coverage of athletes competing resulted low, because there are worldwide limited resources to draw on, follow, and develop people with disabilities as athletes. According to these scenarios, it is plausible that athletic identity may be lost after acquiring a physical disability when the prevalent cultural models promote a negative notion of adapted sport as not real sport (Smith and Sparkes, 2012). Research suggests that disability narratives have an impact on whether individuals with disabilities consider adapted sport as a legitimate physical activity postinjury, and on their positive or negative self-narrative identity constructions (Perrier *et al.*, 2013).

### 3. Storytelling methodology and the theory of narrative identity

During the last two decades, the narrative approach has had a major impact on the humanity and the social sciences (Chamberlayne, 2000) and has also found its way to be investigated into the organisational literature.

The narrative form gives meaning and coherence to individual experience: people rely on it for their day-to-day discourse to shape and indeed to construct their identities. Much of the work of analysis of human sciences researchers is to do with seeking, constructing, and deconstructing the individual's life story, by transference and countertransference reflexive interaction tools and/or content analysis (Covington, 1995: 407).

In particular, the Theory of Narrative Identity (Gergen and Gergen, 1987; Kerby, 1991; Gergen, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1996) considers the identity as the construct which provides the person with a sense of continuity of being over time, which creates a sense of coherence so that the divergent experiences form an interconnected whole, and which gives meaning to one's experiences and to life as a whole. All these aspects of identity: continuity, coherence and meaning, are created by putting one's experiences in life into a life story, a narrative. Therefore, identity necessarily has a narrative form. This is also the reason why in analysis and organisational studies, researcher let people tell him/her their life stories or collect them by archival, social media and digital data because through these narratives he/she learns about the personality and the identity of the individuals (Roesler, 2006: 576).

Covington (1995: 406) continues by arguing that "[b]iography has to do with imposing patterns in order to establish meaning". This is certainly a very important aspect of the narrative approach in the social sciences: the events we experience in our lives do not have meaning in and of themselves, but they acquire meaning in acts of interpretation by the experiencing mind (Josselson and Lieblich, 1995). Also, experiences do not automatically

become coherent, but coherence and continuity are constructions of the individual (Linde, 1993). This happens by imposing patterns on the primary material of experience. Now the question of biography research and, in this case, also the question of psychological and organisational analysis grounded on narratives is: which pattern is imposed by a particular individual, which pattern governs his/her life course, and where are these patterns taken from?

Jung (1995 [1911-1912/1952]) pointed out that personal myths, which are archetypal patterns found for example in mythology and fairy tales, could govern the life course of individuals, in most cases unconsciously.

Many authors pointed out clearly that individuals narrating their life story often use typified story patterns that resemble the well-known narratives of their culture (Mishler, 1986; McAdams, 1993). The psychologist Bruner (1995), for instance, pointed out that many storytellers use the classical forms of comedy and tragedy or the hero story pattern for shaping their personal stories. Lieblich (1998) outlined that from the 1960s on storytellers more and more make use of a pattern she calls the self-realisation narrative for shaping their biographies, a narrative pattern which has developed through the influence mainly of psychological and psychotherapeutic theories on the cultural mainstream.

For this research project, we intend to use the method of narrative and biography analysis (Riessmann, 1993; Josselson and Lieblich, 1995; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998) to look for such patterns in autobiographical stories of athletes, that inspire their identities and influence the sport performance.

#### **4. Methodology: phrasal storytelling through manual content analysis**

The exploratory study was conducted, adopting a qualitative methodology, using the manual content analysis technique of interviews by sports athletes using Microsoft Excel. Content analysis is one of the techniques used for investigated narratives, especially narrative identity constructs through storytelling (Smith, 2000; McLamore and Uluğ, 2020). This technique allows us to obtain useful, reliable, and valid information from narratives that provide interesting inputs for researchers and practitioners. Indeed, it represents a data analysis technique which can overcome the limits regarding the mere counting words for interpreting the underlying context and meanings of the content with the goal to classify large amounts of text into efficient categories able to represent similar meanings.

In our study, using the method of narrative and biography analysis, we explore the autobiographical stories of athletes, which affect and define their identities and sports performance, through a manual content analysis, counting and categorising their words and sentences linking them to the major features taken into account.

We conducted a manual content analysis of all the documentation, primary and secondary data sources, taken into account. In particular, the portrait of the narratives by sports athletes was built collecting and elaborating information and data through specialised and general websites, press and magazines, and blogs. We analysed the websites and all the other sources so as to identify the most representative and significant narratives detected in statements made by athletes.

## 5. What athletes declare about their life: results and discussion

Here, we provide a brief analysis of some sentences and expressions used by sports athletes in the world, which can be read through a narrative identity construct using the content analysis.

Specifically, the table shows ten sentences extrapolated by athletes' interviews available and collected through websites, blogs and press and magazines. Different nationalities were chosen, with a prevalence of Italians and different sport disciplines. Furthermore, cases of ransom have been included through sport, for athletes who have been attacked and lived shock events and, as in the case of Manuel Bortuzzo, this has changed his life forever.

The athletes' sentences are almost always used as aphorisms or examples for everyone. They are often the sign of personal and social redemption. Almost always they have an example value while representing a personal experience. They are often linked to an athletic moment but also to a career. They are a reference point for the community.

Table 5.1 shows examples of athletes aware of being part of history such as Ayrton Senna or Diego Armando Maradona who were aware of the epic that approached their exploits and, therefore, pose the problem of the example, to semi-unknown and now emerging athletes who, for this reason, in their statements are more focused on the personal importance of the occasion that presents itself to them.

An interesting feature can be underlined in the way in which individual sports athletes are more strongly identified than those who are part of a team and, for this reason, refer to greater collegiality. Another interesting aspect is represented by those who have gone from the role of players to that of coaches who perhaps play a more stimulating role.

Athlete	Nation	Sport	Special condition	Sentence
Federica Pellegrini	Italy	Swimming	Extremely long career	[after Korea World Championship] "The reasons for staying up high can be found within you by setting yourself goals that will surely change over the years".
Roberta Bruni	Italy	Athletics		[after winning Universiadi] "I came out of all the tunnels, even from the depression".
Manuel Bortuzzo	Italy	Swimming	This athlete was seriously injured by mistake in an ambush and went from being a swimming promise to those fighting to regain a normal life this sportsman was seriously injured by mistake in an ambush and went	[after the aggression] "How do I see myself in 10 years? I hope to stand up. To look forward, you don't have to look back. My life is always the same. There is a logistical problem, but they are the same as always. I could beat my head and not be myself anymore. Meet who shot me? I wouldn't change anything, and I think I



Athlete	Nation	Sport	Special condition	Sentence
			from being a swimming promise to those fighting to regain a normal life.	would laugh because it didn't make sense what they did".
Daisy Osakue	Italy	Athletics	Victim of a racist attack. Italian but Nigerian born.	[after the aggression] "The eye hurts, and it hurts even more to know that there are people who go around having fun like this, but I don't give up! I am coloured, proud of my origins, but I feel very Italian - he underlines - to get to wear the blue jersey must be a great effort: those who don't like it that black athletes do usually speak from the sofa ...".
Rafael Nadal	Spain	Tennis	Extremely long career	[Wimbledon 2018] "Mental strength distinguishes samples from quasi-champions."
Ayrton Senna	Brazil	Formula 1		"In Formula 1, there is no curve where it cannot be surpassed. In life too".
Lance Armstrong	USA	Cycling	Important health problems	"I am convinced that every human being has a finite number of heartbeats. I do not intend to waste my running around doing exercises".
John James Patrick	New Zealand	Rugby	Coach in Italy	"I want the Italians to play rugby as they drive: without fear, aggressive and absolutely unpredictable".
Boris Becker	Germany	Tennis		"When you are young, you are looking for your identity, and winning is a way to express yourself. When I lost, I wanted to die; and since with the victory I became someone, consequently, in the defeat I was nobody".
Diego Armando Maradona	Argentina	Football		[July 5, 1984, at the official presentation at the San Paolo stadium in front of 70,000 spectators] "I want to become the idol of the poor boys of Naples because they are like me in Buenos Aires".

Table 5.1. Summary of narrative identity examples in the sport setting.

The narration of these ten sentences tends to highlight how these athletes have represented their identity, their history, the progress that has built and modified their life as athletes, on the one hand, and women and men, on the other hand. The first athlete analysed in the table is Federica Pellegrini, one of the longest-lived swimmers in the history of this sport: in her statement, she highlights the difficulty of being at extremely high levels of performance for such a long period. His lexicon ties his goals to a long, incredibly long, period, in which ups and downs are physiological but not for those who are always beyond the threshold of success. Thus, Roberta Bruni, winner of the Universiadi, underlines how sports are the solution for change, as she comes out of the tunnel of depression with athletic success. It is told that is the change of victory that takes away the dark evil. Still, Manuel Bortuzzo, a promising athlete who has risen to the headlines for a casual injury but who has changed his young life forever, reveals in the words that he uses irony, indeed a bitter sarcasm that represents all the strength of an athlete who faces his most difficult challenge. That change, in this definitive case, which in the narration even more parallels sport and life. Daisy Osakue, on the other hand, is an athlete who highlights in her interviews how the racist aggressions suffered by the colour of her skin and which had a peak in real physical aggression, gave her an even more important commitment in sport and in what for her it meant in affirming her identity as a person and not as a woman belonging to a race. Rafael Nadal still is a tennis player famous for his res palm but perhaps equally famous for his attitude to victory. His sentences are often ironic but also epic; also in this case, they represent an exceptional career but full of accidents and difficulties to overcome. Ayrton Senna left posterity with an almost mythical affirmation, his life was a circuit, and his difficulties the curves to overcome, none is impossible, a phrase that then became a real aphorism where the word “curve” evokes the whole need for “overcoming”. Lance Armstrong in his affirmation then poses himself as to underline the passage from the temporal narrative, the heartbeat of the training, to the eternity of the athletic gesture: the daily duration of an exercise is projected into the durability of the sporting enterprise, from its affirmation this is out with clarity and emphasis. John James Patrick was first an athlete and then a coach. It was not easy for him to work in a country where rugby is loved, but less than other sports and his interviews have always aimed to improve not only his identity as a coach but to highlight the construction of national identity in the sense of this sport. It makes a comparison between automobile circuits and oval ball sport, not surprisingly, it tries to overcome cultural barriers. Boris Becker has instead distinguished himself for a career born when he was particularly young, and that led him to develop an important resilience after the normal defeats that occurred, the strength was his resilience in a career that had two distinct phases, and his interviews have always highlighted these two different eras. Maradona closes the storytelling tour when as a young leading footballer in the world he arrives in Naples still full of his very poor origins that he never forgot to mention in his outpourings: football was a way of making social emancipation, and this transpires from his famous sentences.

## 6. Conclusions

In the sports setting, the debate on the issues investigated is particularly heated and still open, although research is scant yet. This exploratory study has thus provided a short description of

narrative identity constructs outlining their effects on athletes' performance in the sport setting. Therefore, the study aims to explore the existence and direction of the relationship between self-narrative modalities, the significant psychological states they feed and the performance components they impact, in light of the theories developed over the last two decades on the subject. In order to achieve this purpose, a descriptive table has been built on a specified panel of stories of successful athletes, chosen as focus groups, investigated using a manual content analysis technique for storytelling, in the preliminary phase with respect to subsequent qualitative analysis of the content that will be applied to a reasoned sample of athletes.

It should be interesting to analyse these issues outlining if and how there are significant differences for athletes because of their social background, sports discipline and personality traits. In the future, after a clear systematic review on the topics, combining narrative identity constructs and performance in a sports setting and also using statistical programs, we can develop this first short research identifying interesting individual and organisational variables, such as personality traits, coaching style, workplace climate, stress, etc.) which can significantly impact on the phenomenon.

This study should give useful suggestions for future research exploring the effect of rational interventions on athletes' storytelling and storytelling intervention on unsuccessful athletes' mental state and performance. Otherwise, it might be interesting to focus on digital storytelling intervention, taking into account the advent and spread of digital technologies also for narratives and storytelling issues.

Digital storytelling refers to a narrative form of video intervention in which an individual is able to record and share a significant life experience, ideas or feelings, through the creation of a brief story using digital means (Center for Digital Storytelling 2019). Thus, digital media have been used within digital storytelling interventions, such as sounds (audio narration, music), images, and texts in storytelling practice for promoting intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogues, and positive health behaviour and sport performance changes (Chan and Holosko, 2017; Chan, 2019).

### **Keywords**

narrative identity; sport; performance; athletes; storytelling; self-awareness

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