Cardiff School of Sport

DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT PROFORMA:

Theoretical / Conceptual

(Including: Desk-Based, Secondary Data, Meta-Analysis) [1]

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Comments	Section
	Title and Abstract Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem. Abstract to include: A concise summary of the theoretical study undertake.
	Extended Introduction [2] To include: outline of context for the question; clear articulation and justification of the research question; indication of research expectations.
	Research Methods/Process [2] To include: justification of a secondary data collection approach; justification of inclusion and exclusion criteria and any search parameters utilised; process/procedure adopted; clear articulation and justification for the structure and development of the study.
	Critical Review [2] To include: a synthesised academic exposition and evaluation of: - factually relevant data - conceptual understanding(s) - theoretical account(s) - established line(s) of argument in relation to the research question(s)/problem posed by the study; logical structural divisions that evidence appropriate and thorough development in critical analysis; reasoned enquiry progressing towards the formation of a justified position in relation to the research question(s)/problem posed by the study.
	Explicit Summary To include: explicit presentation of position concluded from the study; discussion of the limitations and a critical reflection of the approach/process/ procedure adopted in the study; an indication of any potential improvements and future developments derived on

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	completion of the study; an insight into any implications and a conclusion which summarises the relationship between the research question and the major findings.
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(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of _____Socio-Culture_____)

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ABSTRACT

Throughout life, each individual is experiencing and displaying different identities re-creating themselves dependant on interactions and contextually relevant incidents. Exposure to books and specifically, autobiographies is becoming an ever increasing occurrence as the level produced greatens. This research looks specifically at sporting autobiographies and how when reading these it can not only shape but change your own personal identity as your interpretations of the text can relate to yourself, your own past and present experiences and also how you perceive yourself in the future. In combining thematic analysis with self-narrative, the study aims to both *tell* and *show* how personal identity can be changed through the realm of reading.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2005 I started cycling, my love, passion and ability for the sport grew quickly. I started competing at a youth level and quickly grew through the ranks moving into the highest junior level in the United Kingdom (UK), this then led me to sign for an academy team of one of the leading professional teams competing nationally and thus compete at the highest senior level in the UK. One of the main factors for my level of success, albeit not entirely successful on the scale of the cycling world, was the reading of Lance Armstrong's two autobiographies; *It's Not About the Bike; My Journey Back to Life (2000)* and *Every Second Counts (2003).* This study will uncover the factors that led me to change and how these two books changed not just my sporting 'career' but also me as a person.

Each person has an individual and unique narrative and inhabits multiple identities through their lifetime, both simultaneously and separately, *"identity is partially created and constructed through experience and intersubjectivity"* (Kondo, 1990, p.209). This would suggest that identity is constantly in the process of being (re)created (Hall, 1996; Kondo, 1990; Shogan, 1999) and would also imply that identity shifts and changes with time, context and interaction with others (Tsang, 1999). These interactions, such as reading, are contextually relevant to each individual and not every interaction will affect people in the same manner. It is these individual experiences that make for interesting research and will draw light upon instances that can hold relevance between different individuals.

Reading a sporting athletes' autobiography would suggest that the person reading it holds interest in the author or feels this person is of interest to them. During the process of reading the autobiography there could be parts that the reader bares relevance to and can understand what is meant thus feeling connected to the author, *"an engaging story can relate this sense [of relationship] to you in such a way that you can identify with it on a personal level, using your own experience to understand and empathize with my experiences"* (Tsang, 1999, p.19). An example of this ability to link an understanding and empathy could be if you hold the same interests such as sport; I am a cyclist therefore meaning my

ability to relate a sense of relationship to Lance Armstrong and his feelings is great. There are many other ways in which this link of understanding can surface and it can be down to simply sharing similar experiences as the author.

In the academic world of sociology the level of research into the effects on an individual from reading a sporting autobiography is minimal if at all existent which is why I wish to highlight this topic area. As both an athlete and an academic I will be able to draw upon my experiences, highlight topical areas whilst introducing relevant research, This research will demonstrate and draw relevance to you (the reader) happenings that you not only understand but also empathize with in your own narrative and experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The study of an individual's narrative has traditionally been subjected more too exactly what it is, Sparkes (1999) states that "Narrative is the telling of stories" (p.19). More recent studies by Stewart, Smith and Sparkes (2011) has furthered this research by studying different autobiographies and how these can be a *"useful resource for illuminating bodies, selves and identities because they are connected to narrative resources and metaphor"* (p.593). Consequently, the literature reviewed in this section focuses on self-identity and the body, Narrative identity formation, Autobiography and sociology and finally Autobiography and Sport as these sub-sections will go on to highlight within the study the very apparent link to another's narrative story being told through autobiography and how in-turn this can affect your own narrative.

Self-identity and the Body

Identity

Identity and the identity of the self can be portrayed in different ways and has been done so by different researchers; Identity has been defined as; *"A label that denotes a social position, occupational title or social title that acts to represent a unifying cultural focus of a group"* (Sands 2002, p.56). Tsang (2000, p.45-46) chose to look at identity in;

> "*response to research that has suggested that identity is partially created and constructed through experience and intersubjectivity (Kondo, 1990); that we make sense of our life experiences (and I would add, our identities) by telling stories that explain and justify them (Richardson, 1995, pp. 209-210).*

Woodward (2000) links with Tsang (1999) in the manner in which identity is looked upon although simplified by indicating that identity is an 'active engagement' that provides a link between the individual (the personal) and the world in which they live (the social).

A key concept of body identity is Habitus. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that Habitus is the very way in which people relate to and treat their bodies which can lead to revealing dispositions. Sparkes (1997) enhanced this research by considering how dominant body stories, or narratives, available in a culture, shape that not only who we think we are, but also who we think we can become in a society. Sparkes (1997) also suggested that identity is formed in the interaction between the self and society with not just one identity being formed but multiple. Identities are also subject to change, or can even disappear; an example here is when an athlete becomes ill or disabled, the individuals' identity is lost because they are no longer seen as an athlete, by themselves and society, but as 'I (they) was (were) an athlete but now I'm sick.

The Body

The body is the key element in how we communicate to each other as both human beings and as sporting athletes. The work of Goffman (1963; 1969; 1983) introduced some very influential theories where he suggests that people's actions and identities are determined by biological bodies. He also suggests that in order for individuals to facilitate social interaction, they usually have the ability and control to monitor bodily performances.

Shilling (2003) interprets Goffmans (1969) suggestion of the importance of the role that the body plays in mediating the relationship between people's self-identity and their social identity by suggesting that *"the social meanings which are attached to particular bodily forms and performances tend to become internalized and exert a powerful influence on an individual's sense of self and feelings of inner*

worth" (p.73). Shilling (2003) points out that although the works of Goffman have proved innovative and insightful, they by no way dictate the theory of the body in society.

Arthur Franks (1991; 1995) research both furthers previous suggestions and recognises that bodies do not emerge out of discourses and institutions; they emerge out of other bodies and it is this concept that interests me and this study.

Frank (1991; 1995) looks at four different body types; Disciplined (regimentation), dominating (force), mirroring (consumption) and communicative (recognition), for the purpose of this study Franks' research on body types and in particular the 'mirroring' body type, will be relevant and therefore used to help draw an understanding of the creation and development of how a coherent sense of self can be constructed.

Frank (1991) supports the idea that the body is formed as a reflection of dominant cultural narratives through his conceptualization of the "mirroring body". The mirroring body represents one of the body's responses to "action problems", which derive from problems of its embodiment within a social context (Frank, 1991). These action problems concern control (involving the predictability of performance); the producing or lacking of desire; the body's relation to others (is the body monadic and closed in on itself, or dyadic and constituted through either dominating or communicative relations with others); and the self-relatedness of the body (sense of embodiment and association, or dissociation from its corporeality).

The mirroring body makes itself predictable through reflecting available consumerist values in order to veil its own lack of desire; the mirroring body produces superficial desires through the consumption of such cultural body-self

values (Frank 1991; Shilling, 2003). Frank's later work (1995) built upon his typology of bodies, considering a number of narrative structures which were synonymous with each body type's response to illness. One narrative structure detailed by Frank (1995) is the "quest narrative", which is related to the metaphorical sense of a "journey" (Stewart, Smith, and Sparkes, 2011). Stewart *et al* (2011) state that a common quest narrative in sport is the "sporting career as a journey", thereby eliciting the transferrable nature of Frank's quest narrative to sporting identities.

Narrative identity formation

Narrative

The research of Laurel Richardson (1995); Tsang (1999) and Sparkes (1999) states that *"Narrative is about the telling of stories"* (p. 4), he also identifies that the stories we tell, listen to and read gives us the opportunity to share experiences about our own lives and also the lives of others. When we read or are told of another person's narrative our imaginations allow us to shape our own worlds according to what we understand, Eisner (1997) stated, "*Narrative, when well crafted, is a spur to the imagination, and through our imaginative participation in the worlds we create we have a platform for seeing what might be called our "actual worlds" more clearly" (p.264).* He also added that such tales can advance and enhance our empathetic forms of understanding (Sparkes, 1999).

The research by Eisner (1997) and Sparkes (1999) was further developed by Smith and Sparkes (2009a) who suggested narrative as a constructed form or template which people rely on to construct stories. Eakins (2008) research supports this idea suggesting an extremely close and dynamic relationship between narrative and identity, claiming that narrative is not simply a literary form but 'part of the fabric of our lived experiences' (p.2). Smith and Sparkes (2009a) claim that individuals construct their stories out of the cultural narratives which they relate to. An example of this would be an amateur cyclist relating to the

narrative told and experienced by a professional. This ability to relate to another's narrative and then intrinsically use it is supported by the self-determination theory.

Although more psychologically related, the self-determination theory can be used within this context to demonstrate relevance to how an individual can change and adapt due to internalising something they perceive relevant. I will briefly explain what the self-determination theory is and demonstrate its link to my study; it comprises of motivation and the basic needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence (Chin, Khoo & Low, 2012). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), humans have basic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. Chin et al (2012) identify and summarise these individual needs in their research; "*Autonomy is defined as freedom of choice. The need for relatedness is the need to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness with others. The need for competence is met when one feels capable, such as when receiving positive and informational feedback; when those needs are satisfied, individuals are motivated, productive and more self-determined"* (p. 2).

To relate this back to my study and why I feel it is important to use, as pointed out by Chin et al (2012) in the above quote, when someone's needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence are met it makes them more productive and more self-determined which is a key, fundamental element to achieving a goal. When reading another's self-narrative and relating it to your own it can make you more determined because you are inspired by what they achieved and you feel you can do the same, maybe not achieve the same goal, but achieve something equally special to yourself. This relates back to Sparkes (1999) and Eisner (1997), Sparkes (1999) suggested that when we read or are told of another person's narrative our imaginations allow us to shape our own worlds according to what we understand, Eisner (1997) stated, "*Narrative, when well crafted, is a spur to the imagination, and through our imaginative participation in the worlds we create we have a platform for seeing what might be called our "actual worlds" more clearly" (p.264).*

Within narrative lies different types of narrative as Frank (1995) identifies are the restitution, chaos and quest narratives. Although Frank (1995) uses these narratives to study illness and specifically cancer they hold relevance and meaning within my study when looked at outside of the illness narrative. The narrative that will be focused on more so than others will be the quest narrative, "*Illness is the occasion for a journey that becomes a quest. What is quested for may never be wholly clear, but the quest is defined by the ill person's belief that something is to be gained from the experience* (p.115). It is this, when taken out of the context of illness that becomes relevant to my study, the 'quest' narrative is about the person taking a journey and believing that something is to be gained from this journey and experience, "*the journey is taken in order to find out what sort of journey one has been taking"* (Frank, 1995 p.117).

Although Tsang (1999), Sparkes (2006), Cortazzi (1993), Polkinghorne (1995), Eisner (1997) and Laurel Richardson (1995) all have slightly differing views on the exact definition of narrative, each fundamentally point out that narrative is the telling of stories through experiences of ourselves and others thus revealing individual identities which links back to the first subsection on **identities.**

Autobiography and Sociology

Autobiography is written by people who have achieved something within their life that they want to share, whether this is the rise and fall of themselves as a celebrity or their success as an athlete or equally their failure, sometimes both. It can also be written to share an emotional journey through illness so that others can be inspired by their apparent success to overcome adversity; of course it is only the overcoming we often hear about as failure to overcome illness sadly can't write books. These reasons for autobiographies being written are the very reason why they are read, people are interested to read stories and be inspired or have their knowledge of their hero broadened so that they can feel a level of understanding towards the author.

When reading a sporting autobiography and experiencing the authors quest narrative and the journey that unfolds enables the reader to draw upon their sense of relatedness to this. Relating back to the self-determination theory (Chin et al. 2012) and the sense of relatedness and belonging, this also helps to understand why, when reading another's quest narrative; we are enabled to understand our own. When understanding our own quest narrative and our autonomy, competence and relatedness is engaged with the authors our own self-determination is increased which would explain the occurrence of internalisation and the change in formation of personal identity. A sense of relatedness would encourage ourselves to adjust to the authors own quest narrative, if this brought success upon the author; then we may feel it can bring success upon ourselves and our own self-narrative.

Autobiography and Sport

Research into autobiographies in sport is a relatively 'new' concept with not many studies to date having been conducted around this topic area. There are 5 key studies under this umbrella term of autobiography and sport that I would like to highlight and briefly review;

1. ***Stewart, C., Smith, B. and Sparkes, A. (2011) Sporting Autobiographies and the role of metaphor. Sport in Society, 14:5, 581-597***
2. ***Sparkes, A. C. (2004) Bodies, Narratives, Selves and Autobiography: The case of Lance Armstrong. Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 28, 397-428***.
3. ***Stewart, C. (2011) Packing a punch for the feminist project? The autobiography of boxer Jane Couch. In A. C. Sparkes (Ed.)*** **Auto/Biography Yearbook 2010** ***Nottingham: Russell Press, 95-111***
4. ***Butryn, T. M. and Masucci, M. A. (2003) It's Not About The Book: A Cyborg Counternarrative of Lance Armstrong. Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 27, 124-144.***

5. ***Sparkes, A. C., Perez-Samaniego, V. and Smith, B. (2011) Social Comparison Processes, Narrative Mapping and Their Shaping of The Cancer Experience: A Case Study of An Elite Athlete. Health (London)***

The study of Stewart et al. (2011) uses 12 published autobiographies to "explore the role of metaphor in shaping the illness experience of elite athletes" (p.581). Sparkes (2004) uses the autobiography of Lance Armstrong (2000) to examine the different body types and narratives experienced by Lance throughout his autobiography. Stewarts (2011) chapter examines the published lives that sporting women tell by studying the autobiography of boxing athlete, Jane Couch. Butryn et al. (2003) explore the autobiography of Lance Armstrong (2000) and the links between his body-self and narrative and how cyborgology can be used to create a cyborg "Counternarrative" alongside his narrative to explore and suggest that Armstrong's story can be read as an exemplar of the postmodern cyborg sporting hero.

The study by Sparkes et al. (2011) follows an elite athlete, David (a pseudonym), and his journey with cancer which in 2007 led to his death. Following his diagnoses, David was invited to take part in interviews exploring his experiences of illness as an elite athlete. Throughout the interview period it came to light that David had read the autobiography of Lance Armstrong (2000) and had internalised what he read changing his own self-belief regarding his diagnoses as displayed here;

> *"Armstrong's (2000) autobiography influenced the directionality of David's upward social comparisons and his choice of comparison targets. His close affinity for the disciplined and dominating body as well as the exclusive athletic identity that Armstrong had developed through his sport also connected with David. Thus, a powerful identification*

> *occurred via the similarities in his own embodied dispositions to the restitution narrative that dominates the early parts of Armstrong's autobiography which deal with treatment regimes and 'battling' cancer (Sparkes, 2004)"* (p.10)

It is this occurrence of internalisation, albeit an extreme case, that signifies an interest for further research and as has been displayed through the brief, and I emphasise, brief reviews of the studies conducted within this topic area of autobiography and sport it has not been done from a 1st person or self-narrative point of view which will bring a new light on an under studied topic area.

As highlighted on a number of occasions within my literature review (p.6 and 9) the work by Sparkes (1997) and Eisner (1997) draws upon the fact that we do in fact internalise narratives that are available within our culture to adapt our own self-narrative but little is known about the extent of this occurrence and how regular it does in fact occur.

Rationale for this study

To summarise, the rationale for this study firstly will be to explore an area of research that has yet to be studied to highlight areas of interest for future research and to also aid future research. For example, by displaying the affects internalisation can have on an individual's personal identity and how this can change by reading a sporting autobiography from a first person point of view, it allows a complete truth to be told with no mixed communications confusing the facts of the narrative told. It will also allow people to understand these changes so that they too can bare relevance and understand their own changes within their personal identity that occurred after reading a sporting autobiography.

As Sparkes (1997) suggests, in order to build on previous research, there is a need to integrate interpretive sociological and psychological perspectives that focus on the ways in which individuals actively develop their sense of self, via narratives and storytelling as “Constructive agents in social life” (p.105). Also as both Eisner (1997) and Sparkes (2006) demonstrated a level of knowledge regarding internalisation of others narratives although still limited this would suggest an apparent need for a first person or self-narrative account to display these theories so knowledge can be factual.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The very constitution of qualitative research helps us to understand the nature, strengths and actions of a phenomenon, therefore taking a holistic approach *"which preserves the complexities of human behaviour"* (Black, 1994, p.425). This would therefore suggest that the methods and methodologies behind qualitative research differs from that of quantitative research, McNamee, Olivier, and Wainwright (2007) highlight that the methods used within qualitative research are different to those in quantitative research. The use of qualitative research was noted by Hardy and Phillips (1996) stating that an increase in the amount of qualitative research in sport over recent years has aimed to *'obtain rich, in-depth, and detailed information from an "insider's" view - one that stresses the perspective of the participant and strives to understand the context or situation in which the experience takes place'* (p. 256).

With the nature of the topic being researched focusing around an individual, myself, and my own feelings, emotions, motives and fundamentally my own narrative this data is not quantifiable to numbers and statistics so qualitative research is not only the most relevant to the topic but also allows for the exploration of a topic, narrative, that is relatively 'un-known' due to the lack of research around this area. This then, in relation to my study's aim; **how an individual's self-narrative is changed through internalization**, will allow us to learn everything we can from one thing, the narrative told from one individual; myself.

Through this realm of qualitative research and in particular self-narrative, it allows the ability to learn, through 'multiple interpretations', 'multiple truths' that are told in the individuals experience which is unique to them alone, and it is this that will make for a study that is most revealing which can therefore aid future research (Tsang, 1999; Sparkes, 1999, 2009).

Sparkes (1994) and Lee (1996) note that within the realms of human activity ‘multiple interpretations’ are possible of what, why and how things happen. They use a basic theory of obtaining a ‘wider angle lens’ to look at this activity so not to focus in on singular reason, backing up the idea that there are ‘multiple truths’. This, very, basic theory is developed with the introduction of the ‘paradigm theories’, which look to break down the complexity of the real world. Although Sparkes (1994) explains three different paradigm theories (different lenses) I wish to draw particular attention to the interpretive paradigm.

The interpretive paradigm displays that ‘multiple interpretations’ of human activity is possible (Sparkes, 1994a) believing that the social world cannot be studied in the same manner as the physical world (Sparkes, 1994). This, moving away from the positivist paradigm where it is believed that the social world can be examined in the same manner that natural scientists have investigated the natural world, will enable the use of a paradigm that boasts multiple realities or truths with the outcome dependant on the researcher rather than machinery, *“interpretive research is an intensely interactive and personal process of engagement that relies heavily on the social skills and creative capacities of the researcher”* (Sparkes, 1994a, p.14).

Methods: Data Collection

This study will be using narrative and specifically self-narrative as its method of data collection. According to Sparkes (2006); *“Narrative is about the telling of stories”* (p.19), with that in mind, self-narrative is the telling of a person’s own personal identity that has been created through life’s experiences and thus told through their own personal narrative. The use of narrative in qualitative research and as a form of inquiry has become increasingly popular among researchers (Stewart, Smith & Sparkes, 2011; Sparkes, Perez-Samaniego and Smith, 2011).

Self-narrative or narratives of the self as noted by Coffey & Atkinson (1996) are both personal and social at the same time and *'although the reported biographical events may be unique to the individual, they are structured according to socially shared conventions of reportage'* (p.61) as this would suggest and as they went on to say it is just as much about how things are said as about what is said. They also went on to note that *'storytelling is culturally situated and relies for its success on culturally shared conventions about language and the hearing of stories'* (p.77) thus in concert with the concept of 'multiple truths'. Each person's self-narrative is dependent on their experiences and the stories they themselves have been exposed too therefore suggesting that self-narratives are unique and it is the interpretations of your experiences and the interpretations made of these by others that establish the value of your self-narrative; what is valuable to one may not be to another; this individuality of self-narrative was stated by Polkinghorne, 1991;

> *"The ways individuals construct private and personal stories linking diverse events of their lives into unified and understandable wholes. These are stories about the self. They are the basis of personal identity and self-understanding and they provide answers to the question 'Who am I?'"* (p.135)

Using self-narrative means that my position will not only be that of the author but also the sole participant within the study. The fact that I am using and studying another's own published story and the effects that had on me personally means that not only will the focus be on my own 'what, why's and how's' but also on theirs too. The key elements of Lance Armstrong's autobiographies will be drawn upon in relation to the initial impact this had on my life and self, then followed by the discussion section which will use theory to explain the occurrences of internalisation that shaped my self-narrative. As Gibbs (2008, p.71) stated this research will bring a new dimension to qualitative research, looking at not just the 'what's' but the 'how's' and 'why's' too.

This self-narrative piece of work also belongs to the readers, as through the realms of reading, they (you) will construct their (your) own meanings, identifying or resisting certain elements of the story. Although this is my own self-narrative and telling of it thus far – capturing specific moments and experiences – this depends on the self-narrative of another (Duncan, 1997; Richardson in Sparkes, 1998 and Tsang, 2000). This means that I cannot claim complete credit for it as it belongs to them too, although not in the same way or invoked with the same power. In the same manner as used by Tsang (2000); '*by others I mean the characters in the narrative with whom I interact, compare and allude to'* (p.47).

Procedure

To obtain my data I undertook approximately 100 hours of reading, research, and data collection this number now coming close to 100, which included reading the autobiographies multiple times. This reading of the autobiographies was to go over them with a more academic mind-set using analytical procedures to pick out the parts that affected me in either a big or small way. These chosen quotations and sections of the book were not selected by chance; it was my analytical process that separated these from the other parts of the books allowing me through the use of the academic research I'd undertaken to gain an understanding of why certain sections affected me. I am also constantly referring back to them, going through the pages in a quick 'scanning' type method to ensure that I don't miss anything out.

I also kept a reflective research diary. This involved me writing memories both good and bad that included rich detail and links to the autobiographies, going through the years of my life and each moment as I remember it; this was neither structured or formal but rather a case of 'getting the words on paper' which I could refer back to and use parts of that I felt necessary to include this reached over 5000 words. This meant leaving parts out of this study but throughout the narrative telling I have ensured that I included the most detail whilst maintaining a flow to the writing to prevent confusion and disillusion to the reader. I then proceeded to

go through academic research, reading and taking notes of the topic areas that explained the experiences I encountered such as narrative and identity.

A Brief Biography

I am a 22year old former, and now returning, competitive road cyclist. Between the ages of 14-18, 14 being when I started cycling, I achieved both national and regional medals competing amongst the best juniors in the country. This then led to me riding full time and signing for an academy of a professional team within the United Kingdom and racing at the highest senior level, competing in internationally ranked events and the 'premier' events amongst the best adult riders from the UK and from around the world. For as long as I can remember I have been influenced by LA and his books using them as inspirational resources.

I also feel it necessary to elaborate on my 'unique' position as author of the text; I belong to the categories of a young adult, white and heterosexual male. Belonging to these categories within society allows me access to areas of social culture and puts upon me a level of social stature, (Sparkes 1994b; 2002). As well as this and as no consequence to the nature of this research I also belong to the sporting world and sporting culture which allows me an additional range of social stature and merit.

As both a former and now returning high-performance cyclist I conform too many of the specifications of hegemonic masculinity that is within sport and exercise discourse. The life experience, socialisation and nurturing process that has occurred during my time within this culture has created the person I am today and my sense of self in relation to sporting culture. This has meant that throughout this period, even when taking a sabbatical from competing, I have engaged in a body project (Shilling, 2003) that has allowed me to maintain a social image of a high-performance cyclist. I have also developed, through the means of sport, a

competitive nature which by all means was developed through the process that is being researched within this study.

Reflective Resources: Points of Reference

Lance Armstrong (2000) it's Not About the Bike – My Journey Back to Life

Released in 2000 and co-authored by Sally Jenkins this insightful autobiography reveals the story of one man's life journey through the early years, his early sporting career, cancer and his post cancer sporting career which sees him go on to win his first Tour de France. The New York Times dubbed it as '*fascinating*'.

Lance Armstrong (2003) Every Second Counts

Released in 2003 as the follow up to the initial book, 'It's Not About the Bike' and co-authored by Sally Jenkins again, This follows on in the turbulent journey of Lance Armstrong's life and his continued dominance in the Tour De France, dubbed as The Sunday Times '*bestseller*' and his overall story from The Independent as '*the stuff of legends* '.

January 2013 – Confession

January 17th 2013 saw Lance Armstrong confess to winning all seven of his Tour De France victories with the aid of doping – *A form of cheating involving drugs such as steroids, testosterone, amphetamines, EPO and blood transfusions.* As this was in the middle of the study I feel it is necessary to outline, albeit briefly, my feelings on the topic and where I now stand in light of this research.

What Lance did I personally don't feel effects his story and the amount of inspiration that generates. He was a man succeeding in sport who found himself on his death bed with a near fatal form of testicular cancer; he then proceeded to recreate himself as a very dominant athlete; Drugs or no drugs that is a hard task

for any person. The argument of whether his drug taking is morally or ethically correct is one that can take up more words than this dissertation allows me but is one I have tried to answer myself via my blog, http://jakeeddy.blogspot.co.uk/ . I have decided to remain focused on the inspiration his story generates and generated for myself rather than the now, this I feel is worthy of its own research study.

Data Analysis

Sparkes (2009a) and Polkinghorne (1995) argue that in the analysing of narrative the researcher must step back from the narrative told and employ analytical procedures, strategies, and techniques in order to abstractly scrutinise, explain, and think about its certain features. This will be even more important when being both the author and participant so I can gain a broad analysis of the data obtained.

The standpoint I will take throughout my narrative writing will be that of a '*storyteller*', Sparkes (2009a) separates this theory from the standpoint of *'story analyst'* in a manner that could argue that the *'storyteller'* is for the more advanced. Whilst the standpoint of *'story analyst'* isn't to be undermined, it doesn't allow the narrative being told to flow with the author breaking it down with the theories involved in each section respectively; *"the researcher steps back from the story generated and employs analytical procedures, strategies, and techniques in order to abstractly scrutinise, explain, and think about its certain features"* (Sparkes, 2009a. p. 281).

This, in contrast to the standpoint of *'storyteller'* means that if I was to use this the narrative told would jump and stop a lot where the use of 'storyteller' will allow me to create a narrative piece of writing that will engage the audience into the use of their own imagination, interpretation and evaluation. It will do this by having a 'smooth flow' throughout leaving the evaluation and comparison to theory

until the discussion section which follows afterwards, this as pointed out by Sparkes (2009a) is entrusting the audience to make their own evaluations where by instead of dictating how the story should be seen it allows the possibility of interpretation from a unique standpoint; *"the author trusts the audience, relinquishes control of the story, allows audiences the freedom to interpret and evaluate the text from their unique vantage points, and will aim to coax them into participating in constructing reality and theory"* (p.282).

Judgment Criteria

The nature of this research and the methods used will generate questions which have been put to other studies of the same nature regarding its quality, validity, reliability, trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility and the judgment criteria's that should be used to asses it (Smith and Sparkes, 2009c and Gratton and Jones, 2010). When judging research, methods should be used that are in line with the nature of the research and not fall back to the more familiar criteria such as the scientific research report, which is committed to traditional notions of "rationality" and "objectivity" (Devault, 1997; Smith and Sparkes, 2009c). Sparkes (2002) claims that orthodox scientific views of validity, reliability, and generalizability make little sense when it comes to judging research that commits to self-narrative and personal subjectivities. In light of this, he suggests that research needs to be judged using criteria that are consistent with their own internal purposes. Sparkes (2002) concludes that as new representational practices emerge, new standards for judging such practices need to be developed.

For the purpose of evaluating the quality of this research, I propose the use of Richardson's (2005) criteria for qualitative judgment (See appendix A). Richardson's criteria are committed to substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and an expression of reality. I feel that the research that has been carried out adheres to each of these criteria providing an insight into how internalization occurs and how this can affect an individual's personal narrative. I

have clearly stated my standpoint as the author of this text taking into reflexive consideration my position within culture and sporting culture which affects my responses to the data and thus the act of writing.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

As mentioned in previous sections the limitations that can occur within my study are that of limiting the audience's ability to 'interpret' and 'evaluate' text from their own point of view (Sparkes, 2009a) where a position of a 'storyteller' would allow me as Frank (1995) points out to take a better position within my writing;

> *'To think about a story is to reduce it to content and then analyse that content. Thinking with stories takes the story as already complete; there is no going beyond it. To think with a story is to experience it affecting one's own life and to find in that effect a certain truth of one's life'* (p. 23)

Other arguments that are often put against the use of narrative and especially that of self-narrative is the occurrence of 'romanticising' and that researchers should proceed with 'caution' when using the realm of narrative; studies carried out by (Sparkes, 2006; Bruner, 1984, 1987, 1990; Gergen, 1994; Gubrium and Holstein 1998; and Linde 1993) have argued that any narrative as a form of communication can be influenced by the *'cultural conventions of telling, the motivations of the teller, by the audience, and the social context'* (Sparkes, 2009, p.20). Therefore to avoid 'romanticising' the truth or true facts of this study, complete openness was maintained throughout ensuring that it is in fact the reader who is left to interpret the text rather than me, the author, dictating through realms of 'hiding' the truth to ensure the reader should take a particular standpoint.

As this is a qualitative study where the data is being collected from multiple readings of published autobiographies in the public domain ethical considerations are by-in-large not applicable. Of course, there are risks that I could bring other people into my narrative without their consent and also bring myself into danger of revisiting emotional experiences that could potentially cause the study to stop. Firstly, to prevent the revealing of any people that are unaware of the study, I will keep them anonymous where possible, and secondly I will allow myself to maintain a trusting, open, relationship with my supervisor and allow myself time to reflect effectively on arising situations so I can uphold a level of understanding of the feelings and emotions that will be explored.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Setting the scene

I first read Lance Armstrong's autobiographies after just over a year of being involved in the sport whilst on a family holiday in France. I am not famed for my liking of social reading yet I was unable to put the books down, grasping every word that was written and learning more about the sport in those two books than anyone had or would teach me.

The beginning

Before reading the books I had a level of understanding for cycling and the brutality the sport imposes on your body but this level of understanding was limited, just how was this sport affecting my life? Was it my life? I picked up Lance's first autobiography, It's Not About the Bike (2000), and this was soon answered for me. The opening paragraph of the book was Lance sharing his passion for cycling, his utter love for the sport, everything it symbolised and how it wasn't just a hobby or a job; it was who he was;

> *"I want to die at a hundred years old with an American flag on my back and the star of Texas on my helmet, after screaming down an Alpine descent on a bicycle at 75miles per hour. I want to cross one last finish line as my stud wife and my ten children applaud, and then I want to lie down in a field of those famous French sunflowers and gracefully expire…"* (p.1)

I understood this. I knew what it felt like to speed down a hill, the pure exhilaration of speeding along at 70kmh on 25mm wide tyres, taking corners so fast that the tyre is squirming to find grip; I watched the Tour De France and was too mesmerized by the fields of yellow sunflowers.

I knew what the sport was to me now, it wasn't just a thing I did but this could become me, it could be everything my body symbolized, it could be my identity and the narrative I told. This sharing of understanding and the use of language used by Lance connected with me and belonging to this same sub-culture meant I could feel connected as he knew what it was like to ride a bike, as Stone (1970) suggested;

> *'one's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning to him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces'* (p. 399).

Me and Him

Mine and Lance's upbringings are not mirror reflections of each other but they share similar characteristics and events that helped shape who we are today and this clicked with me and helped me understand why I behaved in certain ways. When I started secondary school as an overweight child I never thought anything of it but going into a bigger school with more children meant I was too soon experience bullying. This experience of negative treatment fuelled my desire to change my appearance and lose weight which in turn led me to cycling but this fuelled something else within me, a burning fire inside me to prove those people wrong and to show that thinking I was weak and vulnerable was the wrong choice.

Lance experienced similar treatment; abandoned by his father at birth and later at home an abusive step-father would ensure Lance had no feelings towards the man he shared his last name with. This treatment coinciding with being an 'outcast' at school meant Lance experienced this negative treatment and as his mum said; "*turn every negative into a positive"* (p.22). This is something I had unknowingly done myself through my experiences and, like Lance, used my negative experiences as positive energy to succeed.

Learning Curve

Cycling hurts. There is no way to deny, avoid, ignore or manoeuvre around it. Every single time you go out on the bike you ride over a hill or you hit a head wind and your legs drive down on the pedals like pistons in a car to keep you moving forward, every muscle in each leg contracting near on fifty times each in a minute for hours on end. As a young boy how was I supposed to understand this, how was I to accept this and realise that there is no possible way to avoid this? Lance proposed an answer for me;

> *"…cyclists are in the business of denial. You deny all the aches and pains because you have to in order to finish the race. It's a sport of self-abuse. You're on your bike for the whole day, six and seven hours, in all kinds of weather and conditions, over cobblestones and gravel, in mud and wind and rain, and even hail, and you do not give in to pain"* (p.5)

Lance's narrative was teaching me the kind of person you had to be to ride a bike, and not just ride a bike but to be successful at it too. You had to accept pain. So I did, I normalized it, I would even shout or growl at myself to keep pushing when I felt like giving in and stopping on the side of the road. I remember when I was 16; I was racing the Junior Tour of Wales, the first stage finished on top of a mountain. As we came to the bottom of this my legs seized, they didn't want to work anymore but I had to keep going, if I didn't I'd stop and never get going again on this unforgiving gradient. Ahead of me a friend of mine was struggling too, but this was unusual, he shouldn't be there, I had to help him. I looked down at my legs and I didn't see my legs I saw two pistons pumping up and down and now they didn't hurt anymore. I stood up, left, right, left, right I was accelerating up the hill, my bike swinging below me as if on a cloud, I rode alongside my friend, looked him in the eye and muttered the words to him *"jump*

on my wheel", he did and I rode as fast as I could for as long as I could ensuring he had my slipstream to help him.

Then pop. My legs exploded, it felt like someone had put the brakes on. I was one hundred metres from the finish but it seemed a distant one hundred miles. I finally reached the finish and found my team car; I collapsed against it and dropped my bike. I leant against the car and slid down it into a slump on the floor. My nose started to bleed, I couldn't see properly and I started to sob, not for being sad but because I couldn't control myself. I was 16 years old and pushed my body to a place I never knew existed. With blood running down my face and my legs acting as dead weights I couldn't help but think I'd have to do it all over again and race the next day but I didn't care because I understood; the sport is a sport of *"self-abuse".*

Changing Unknowingly

Before cycling I was an average kid, lived day by day never looking to the future or dreaming about what I wanted to do with my life. Cycling changed this for me. I sit here writing this a competitor, a successful 22year old who in the last decade has achieved more than most by this age. This hasn't happened for no apparent reason, the narrative I was beginning to live out due to what Lance was teaching me brought this out of me; this never ending drive for success.

Lance is a driven individual, success and being the best he can be is what he lives by and like myself it isn't something that was encrypted within him at birth, it's something he learnt;

> *"My mother told me…if you're going to get anywhere, you're going to have to do it yourself, because no one is going to do it for you"* (p.30)

In life you have people around you who will help you and assist you on your way such as your parents, coaches, colleagues and people such as my dissertation supervisor. Although they are there to help they aren't there to do the work for you, you have to do this for yourself and you have to put the hard work in. After reading sections of the book such as the last quote, I internalized it and embedded it into me so much so that this changed my entire outlook and identity, I went from not really knowing what I wanted to being a highly driven individual and this was noticed by those around me. A former boss once told me; *"you will be very successful at whatever you do in your life. You will achieve great things".* This wasn't by chance; this was because my identity and the narrative I lived, told and displayed ensured that those around me knew who I was and what I was about.

Everyday Life

When cycling came into my life and more so, the time after I read Lance's two autobiographies it wasn't just my sporting ability that changed but life itself. Before I was a slightly overweight child, now you couldn't find fat on me. I had little confidence outside of my comfort zone, now new things didn't faze me. I wasn't the best at sporting activities in general, now I won the school runs in the best times. It wasn't the fact that I idolized Lance as my God but instead I had found this great ability to internalize and use imagery to visualise myself doing great things. When I read Lance describing himself riding up an Alp, I could see myself doing it, hands aloft in the air, saluting the crowd on a great victory.

Each word I read was and still is capturing, it allows me to broaden my mind to new experiences and I can sense the pain in the words written and the excitement too. This ability also led me to change how I went about everyday tasks; no task was too small now and if I did fail then it wouldn't faze me, rather it would guide me to change and not fail again in the future.

In Lances second autobiography; '*Every Second Counts'* (2003) after gaining a bronze medal in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, when he expected gold, it was this memorable experience that helped shape him not only as an athlete but as a man;

> *"When you win, you don't examine it very much, except to congratulate yourself. You easily, and wrongly, assume it has something to do with your rare qualities as a person. But winning only measures how hard you've worked and how physically talented you are; it doesn't particularly define you beyond those characteristics.*
>
> *Losing on the other hand, really does say something about who you are. Among other things it measures are: do you blame others, or do you own the loss? Do you analyse your failure, or just complain about bad luck?*
>
> *If you're willing to examine failure, and to look not just at your outward physical performance, but your internal workings, too, losing can be valuable. How you behave in those moments can perhaps be more self-defining than winning could ever be. Sometimes losing shows you for who you really are."* (p.70-71)

This to me, defined being a true champion, only the truest champion could hold his head high and shake the hand of the competitor who beat him and congratulate him. It's too easy to get carried away in the heat of the moment and lose merit not only in sport but whether its work, academia or socially, if a person betters you then, shake their hand, congratulate them, then and only then will you

know what it is like to really be the best possible person. Just how though, did I use this in my life?

I'm not an academic, not to excuse any poor form in my writing, it's a fact. This doesn't come naturally to me, it is something I have to work very hard at but this now doesn't faze me. Instead, I appreciate the challenge and I do my upmost best to do the best I can and if it isn't the 'winning' grade then I know in myself I worked hard to get it. The same in work, I don't believe any job comes naturally to anyone but hard work will get you where you want to be but if a person beats you there, congratulate them because one day that person could be the individual to help you get where you need, as Lance said; '*Losing shows who you really are'*. This is me, I live by the frequently used religious quote; '*do unto others as you would have them do to you'*, not only in sport but in life because as Lance put it; '*you easily, and, wrongly assume it has something to do with you as a person'* but instead hard work achieves great things and when those great things don't come a head held high is worth the more merit.

The Flamme Rouge

The Flamme Rouge in the cycling world is the red flag hung above the road indicating the final 1kilometre of the race. An appropriate and subject relevant heading to use for what is the finale of this section; my original heading of this study was - **sporting autobiographies - how the formation of personal identity is changed through internalization** – throughout this section I have highlighted areas that have affected me, albeit not every section, but the sections which had a great effect on me as a person and as a cyclist.

Lance Armstrong, born Lance Edward Gunderson; September 18, 1971, diagnosed with testicular cancer October 1996 and went on to win the Tour de France for the first of seven times in 1999.

By no means do I see Lance as a God, or a superior human being, I see Lance whose life events told a story that had both highs and lows, as an inspiration. He taught me as an aspiring cyclist how to ride a bike; he taught me how to suffer on a bike and subject my body to more pain than most could fathom; he taught me the beauty of the sport and what it can bring you; he taught me about cancer and the ugly side of life but most importantly as a growing child he taught me how to live a life that had no limits, if I want something bad enough I know what I have to do, I have to work hard for it and eventually it will come; *"Pain is temporary, quitting lasts forever"* (Armstrong, L. 2003. p. 4).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

To revisit; the knowledge available within academia of how autobiographies directly affect the sense of self and identity of those who read them is very limited. Further, autobiographies and as a sociological resource for inquiry used within this study the use of autobiography within academic research is also limited. Stewart, Sparkes and Smith (2011) note this, in their research stating that although the autobiographies are a rich source of information by-and-large they have been neglected as a research tool. This study contributes to work which might use autobiography as a bountiful resource, widely available in the public domain, and further sheds light on the untouched area of identity formation in relation to interactions with books, despite there being an abundance of literature available on identity and narrative.

Firstly it highlights the literature available surrounding these topic areas demonstrating how these are formed through links with experience (Tsang, 1999); mirroring the narratives we are exposed too (Frank, 1991, 1995) and interpreting another's narrative to help create our own (Eisner, 1997).). Secondly, the study goes on to detail the methodology used to obtain the data noting the openness of the participant, myself, remaining honest throughout to prevent disillusion to the reader by romanticising the story (Sparkes, 2009), Thirdly, the study details a very open and 'truthful' self-narrative detailing the parts of the books that affected me, my identity and narrative to what I am now. Lastly, the study provides an insight into the internalization process uncovering just how autobiographies can implement change into an individual's personal identity.

Conceptual Lessons: Changing Myself

My narrative initiates with the outline of my identity as it was before the books and how after first reading the books this changed, as Tsang (1999) notes; "Identity is partially created through experience and intersubjectivity" (p.45-46). Reading the books was a new experience and I was being exposed to new ideas of the sport I was also new to, ideas held by a person who had years of experience in the sport. Sparkes (1997) supports this theory noting that stories or

narrative, available in a culture, shape that not only who we think we are but also who we think we can become in a society. When Frank's (1991, 1995) theories of how the body is used in society and in particular his theory of the 'mirroring body' are included within this we can hypothesize that my new experience was affecting my personal identity due to my 'mirroring' of the body I was reading about which was thus changing my narrative because it made me think not only about who I am but also what I could become. In this 'mirroring' of another 'ideal' body type producing superficial desires through the consumption of such cultural body-self values (Frank 1991; Shilling, 2003) I valued Lance's body type to be superior thus wanted to re-create that upon myself.

This analysis can be carried through the narrative exacting points that carry this same hypothesis; as I was reading the books I was establishing the person I was in that moment and the person I could become. The notion of 'he did it so why can't I' was to become a question repeatedly asked of myself; all I needed was the direction to do this. This direction was provided from Lance.

Specific Elements

Throughout the narrative it is evident that my work ethic not only changed in the realms of sport but also in general day to day life too. What I had learnt from Lance on how to work hard to achieve success in cycling was being transferred into my life as a whole, I now lived by the notion of *'if you want it bad enough, you can have it. You just need to be willing to work hard'*. To recall, Chin, Khoo and Low (2012) depict the notion of the 'self-determination theory' – where by when a person's autonomy, relatedness and competence are all met it results in a more productive and self-determined attitude which is a fundamental aspect to achieving a goal. This when linked with Frank's (1995) ideas of narrative and in particular the 'quest narrative' enables the reader to draw upon their own sense of relatedness when reading another's 'quest narrative'.

Frank (1995) noted that the quest narrative is about the person taking a journey and believing something is to be gained from the journey and experience, *"the journey is taken in order to find out what sort of journey one has been taking"* (p. 117). When reading through my self-narrative it is easy to notice the belief that I had a lot to gain from my new experiences which when Franks (1991, 1995) theory of the 'mirroring body' are also used the notion that I was mirroring Lance's own quest narrative, not the belief or idea we were living the same narrative, but the same belief that we had something to gain from our journey and experiences.

It is this ability to relate to another's narrative through the happenings in your own that helps to understand why, when reading another's quest narrative; we are enabled to understand our own. When understanding our own quest narrative and our autonomy, competence and relatedness is engaged with the authors our own self-determination is increased which would explain the occurrence of internalisation and the change in formation of personal identity. A sense of relatedness would encourage ourselves to adjust to the authors own quest narrative, if this brought success upon the author; then we may feel it can bring success upon ourselves and our own self-narrative.

Disciplined Body: Language of the Machine

Throughout my narrative language was used to describe moments that reflected the notion of the disciplined body. This wasn't a purpose act to create drama or excitement to my narrative it was truthful reflections on how I behaved and acted:

1. *"I didn't see my legs I saw two pistons pumping up and down and now they didn't hurt anymore"* (p.29)
2. "*I would even shout or growl at myself to keep pushing when I felt like giving in and stopping on the side of the road"* (p.29)

Sparkes (2004) and Stewart *et al* (2011) both use the notion of language within their studies depicting the notions behind how language is used within the creation of identities and telling narratives; where Sparkes notes Foucault's (1978, 1979) theory as used by Frank (1991) of the disciplined body and Stewart notes the role of the metaphor within illness. Sparkes (2004) notes that; *"In dissociating from itself, the disciplined body also ceases to feel pain as its own"* (p.400), this notion of dissociating my body from itself was not purposely done rather where Lance had taught me that the sport was a 'sport of self-abuse' I had internalized this and subconsciously knew that I had to push beyond my limits to achieve success, I had to maintain that disciplined mentality because nothing else but this would result in success.

Stewart *et al* (2011) notes that; "*the metaphors we learn to help tell stories about ourselves are important in terms of how we construct one way of being in our world and acting within it"* (p.584), again to recall Lance spoke freely of how the sport was a 'sport of self-abuse', this notion was not shared by everyone but Lance declared this because he knew he had to push harder than the rest to beat them, he not only spoke of it, he did it too. To achieve success as Lance did I needed to act and behave in the same manner as he, I therefore shared similar language to him, separating my body from the notion of pain and talking about it as if two separate beings. This separating occurred within my language and use of metaphors when talking of my bodies actions, *'I didn't see my legs, I saw two pistons'*, this language was now part of my vocabulary and it ensured that I resembled the discipline body type, mirroring that of Lances.

Truth

Truth is what you make of it; two people's ability to interpret the same thing differently is what makes for individuality, the realm of multiple truths and Sparkes (1994a) notion of the 'The interpretive paradigm' which displays that 'multiple interpretations' of human activity is possible (Sparkes, 1994a) believing that the social world cannot be studied in the same manner as the physical world

(Sparkes, 1994). When it comes to a person writing either academically or for reasons such as autobiographies, certain reliance is put upon the author to be truthful from the outset to ensure the reader is not disillusioned.

Throughout my writing I have maintained an honest approach, firstly to make my results the highest standard possible but to also ensure that there is no 'romanticising' (Sparkes, 2009) of the story. This romanticising of a story can now be put against Lance Armstrong and his story in light of his confession to cheating and this leads to issues not only of truth in his story, sanctions due to lying on oath or repayment of his prize and sponsorship money but to the fans such as myself to question the 'truth'. It is these questions - 'what was actually true?' – 'was any of it true?' that are being asked of his narrative and as Eakin (2008) notes *'readers expect auto-biographers to exhibit some basic respect for the truth of their lives – break that trust and suffer the consequences'* (p.20) – Eakin makes a very valid point, the consequences must be met, but what exactly are those consequences?

This comes down to the individual and how they react to these confessions will be different to others but for me – the subject of this study and why I feel it's important to note – it takes nothing away from the inspiration his story gives me. Of course, the parts about the Tour De France wins now have to be taken with a pinch of salt but the initial parts of his story, his younger years and first years as a cyclist really hold relevance to me which is what still and always will inspire me; As Sparkes (2009a) notes, it comes down to the audience's ability to interpret and evaluate the text from their own point of view and this is what it comes down to. What is meaningful to one may not be to another – individuality will remain unique.

Future Research

For future research, this topic could be taken in two directions. Firstly, this study only looked at one individual's narrative that surrounded one autobiography when many other people have been affected by autobiographies that are available to the public. Therefore, I suggest that to take this further a more in depth exploration of the effects of autobiography on the formation of personal identity is carried out. Secondly, Smith and Sparkes (2009a) maintain that narratives can illuminate and foreground multifaceted forms of socio-cultural life therefore I feel it is necessary to look deeper into the role that Lance Armstrong played as an influential athlete through the years of 1990-2012 and how his confession has brought change not only on to himself but others too.

In the light of future research I feel it appropriate to highlight the limitations that this methodology faces in the realms of academic research. A narrative approach is a new concept within academia (Eakin, 2008) and the methodology used within this study has not been seen before within sports sociology therefore if people feel they want to participate within this methodology and writing a self-narrative, romanticising of the text must be avoided. As previously noted, this will disillusion the reader, so it is of the highest importance to remain open and honest throughout the writing which will result in a much clearer narrative allowing the reader to interpret it as they see fit.

The use of narrative and in-particular self-narrative within academia has often been argued against, which displays a possible limitation of this research; Sparkes (2002) warns that self-narrative is often charged with self-indulgence although he goes on to note that;

> *'to characterize self-narrative as self-indulgent is to make claims about its content by suggesting that it only concerns the self of the writer, divorced from the*

> *concept of the social, which challenges the strong relational nature of the self and society.'* (p.92)

In the same manner the use of autobiography within academic research has often been neglected as a resource to be studied and following the omissions from Lance I strongly state that it should not take away the richness of autobiography as a resource as this research and research carried out by Stewart *et al.* (2011) have put forward; by using autobiographies *'we are able to explore the narrative identities that auto-biographers create when they tell stories about their lives'* (p. 591). These written stories are a rich source of data to help further examine the formation of identities and narratives in the future. Further criticisms of this methodology surround the methods of judgment with regards to narrative research concerning issues of reliability, validity and generalizability.

As argued in this study, qualitative research cannot be viewed in the same light as quantitative and scientific approaches, Sparkes (2002) claims that orthodox scientific views of validity, reliability, and generalizability make little sense when it comes to judging research that commits to self-narrative and personal subjectivities. In light of this, he suggests that research needs to be judged using criteria that are consistent with their own internal purposes. Sparkes (2002) concludes that as new representational practices emerge, new standards for judging such practices need to be developed.

Concluding Comments

As Smith and Sparkes (2009a) have argued, we are all essentially storytelling animals, who are embedded in systems of narrative identity (Eakin, 2008). Therefore personal stories are simultaneously personal and social due to the cultural influences inscribed upon our narrative identities (Eakin, 2008; Smith and Sparkes 2009a; 2009b; Sparkes, 1997, 1999). This therefore suggests that self-narrative diffuses the personal and social which can enable our ability to understand the connections between the two.

Findings demonstrate that the connection between those who read sporting autobiographies and a change of formation in personal identity very much exists. Therefore, this will also affect the self-narrative that is not only told by an individual but also displayed through their personality, attitude and behaviourisms. However, the extent of this change depends entirely on the individual as the ability and extent of interpretation bares no limit given past experiences that can affect how the literature is read and perceived are not subject to anyone, they are unique. It is this uniqueness of individuals which will throughout time mean some narratives create a clique, bear relevance and have the possibility of implementing change within an individual. Whilst this is the case another's interpretations cannot be dismissed because what applies to one may not apply to another.

Identity is the link between the individual (the personal) and the world in which they live (the social) and the construction of this is through experience and intersubjectivity. A part of this experience is to encounter another's narrative and the experiences of others which in turn will allow our imagination to shape our own worlds according to what we understand. When this is linked with the self-determination theory and the reasons behind reading an individual's autobiography which often link to admiration of the individual it explains why change in the formation of personal identity occurs as when reading another's self-narrative and relating it to your own it can make you more determined because you are inspired by what they achieved and you feel you can do the

same, maybe not achieve the same goal, but achieve something equally special to yourself. Smith and Sparkes (2009b) conclude that *'the embodied and evocative qualities associated with storytelling allow the capacity to actively evoke theoretical questions and responses inside the body of the reader'* (p. 282). The reader is therefore invited to place themselves within the context of the research, evoking an embodied, emotional response to the narrative identity structures which impact upon their own body-selves.

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APPENDECIES

Appendix: A –

Richardson's (2005) judgement criteria for qualitative research

Criteria	What/How/Why I did it
Substantive Contribution	This study contributes to academic research because a study of this nature hasn't been carried out before. The effects of autobiography on the readers has to date not been studied, leaving a gap in academic research on a topic that the majority of the public carryout, reading. By highlighting areas of interest within this study I am allowing future research to be carried out which can explore further into the topic.
Aesthetic Merit	To gain aesthetic merit I have spent a lot of time on developing my writing ability. Although this still comes down to the opinion of the reader by taking the time to develop it I have allowed this study to have a better position when being judged.
Reflexivity	Self-narratives are very reflexive and this is something I have ensured to include and do so in a very open manner. To ensure the reader really understands the study and why I carried it out I remained open throughout ensuring that nothing was hidden to disillusion the reader.
Impact	The impact of this study I hope Is very impactful. It opens up the idea of what we read and how it affects us, it can be in a big or small way and positive or negative but this study helps to bring understanding to that. It puts theory behind the practice.
Expression of Reality	To create a real sense of reality I have put across the feelings and effects internalizing the books had on me. The depth I went into saw no bounds as I wanted the reader to sense my willingness of an open mind and to do the same.