

**Narratives of Performance: An Interdisciplinary Qualitative
Ethnography Investigating the Storied Lives of Amateur and
Professional Boxers**

**Submitted by Paul Solomon Lennox, to the University of Exeter as a thesis
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Abstract

This thesis identifies the shared pool of narrative resources, which constitute the public discourses and cultural meanings of the sport of boxing, in order to examine how individual boxers engage with them when performing their narrative identities. It is argued that the shared pool of narrative resources for boxing contain myths and legends that are taken for granted and yet heavily invested in by boxers and academics alike. This project explores how individual boxers engage with these resources in order to make sense of their own experiences and to formulate their narrative identity. The thesis asks how a thorough investigation of the shared narrative resources, and their use by boxers, provides new insights into what the sport of boxing means to boxers, and how shared resources are engaged with in order to perform idiosyncratic ontological narratives.

This project makes a unique contribution, as it is the first project of its kind to fully consider the relationship between the individual accounts provided by boxers and the narrative resources available to them. It pays particular focus to the narrative resources as they relate to amateur and professional boxers alike. Through a performance ethnography, and qualitative inquiry approach, research data was collected and co-constructed over a period of three years. This data informed the reading of boxing texts in order to ascertain what the shared pool of narrative resources were for boxers, and how individuals used and engaged with them. This project found that the narrative resources of boxing were powerful, persuasive, and provided vocabularies of motives for individual boxers. The shared pool of resources, whilst constitutive of the cultural

meanings of boxing, were engaged with by individual boxers to tell stories about the desire for transformation, communion, respect and generativity.

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