

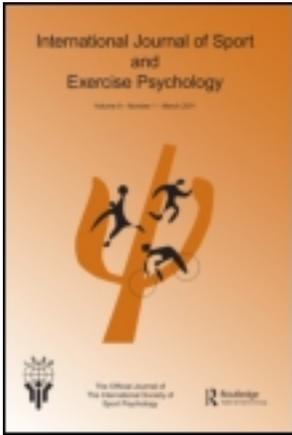
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Dialogue, monologue, and boundary crossing within research encounters: A performative narrative analysis

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DIALOGUE, MONOLOGUE, AND BOUNDARY CROSSING WITHIN RESEARCH ENCOUNTERS: A PERFORMATIVE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on qualitative sports research, we present two stories in this article to explore how researchers may orient to boundaries within research encounters and perform boundary crossing and re-crossings. The performative narrative analysis of the stories highlights the fluidly shifting dynamics of sustaining and crossing boundaries and how this ongoing process is shaped by dialogical and monological relations. Through our analysis, we suggest that questions concerning “how close is too close” to research participants and “how far is too far” from them are neither simple nor straightforward. These questions are complex and shift in time and space, ebbing and flowing, as people move between merging and unmerging, self-sufficiency and non-self-sufficiency, and finalizing and unfinalizing practices that colonize and de-colonize. Some reflections on what might be learned from theories of dialogue and boundary crossings within the domain of sport and exercise psychology in relation to colonizing practices, empathy, and claiming the final work are provided.

Keywords: dialogue, monologue, boundary, narrative

Boundaries, as described by Frank (2004), are cultural conventions that separate what is close—on “our side” of the boundary—from what is distant and potentially unapproachable, risky, and problematic. As such, boundaries are partly about distancing practices that have consequences. Indeed, our side of the boundary means us (insiders) as opposed to the Other (outsiders), and crossings such boundaries may pose risks and lead to various problems. Boundaries, therefore, matter. This view has also been taken on board by sport and exercise psychology professionals who, in both research and applied work, operate within and across boundaries. For example, talking about sports injury, Brewer and Petitpas (2005) signaled that boundaries and the ways psychologists may, in certain circumstances, overstep them are of some relevance to the field of

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sport and exercise psychology in terms of professional relationships, ethics of helping, and respect. Likewise, in his work on sex between a sport psychologist and an athlete, Anderson (2005) drew attention to the issue of “merging with the other” so boundaries dissolve and the ethical dilemmas this raises for both the psychologist and athlete.

Similarly, Burke’s (2005) work on sports team communication highlighted how issues of boundaries can play a key role in sport and exercise psychology research and practice. To give a flavor of this, consider first the following exchange between Burke (KB) and a coach named Norman.

Norman: I think a big reason why I have sort of kept a distance between my players and me is the male-female thing.

KB: You mean a male coach with female athletes?

Norman: Yes, I always wanted to keep clear *boundaries* so the players, or anyone for that matter, don’t get any wrong ideas that could jeopardize my job. That’s one reason why I’ve always had a female assistant.

KB: Do you think your well-meaning attempt to mark clear *boundaries* has maybe gotten in the way of your just being yourself around your athletes?

Norman: I know it has. Without a doubt. (emphasis added; Burke, 2005, p. 57)

Set against this brief backdrop, questions emerge about boundaries. In particular, for us, how close is too close to a research participant, and how far is too far? Linked to these are questions regarding how do we know when we have gotten it “right?” And what might all this mean for sport and exercise psychology in relation to de-colonizing practices? Therefore, in what follows, we seek to explore these questions by providing and then analyzing two stories that illuminate how we have oriented to boundaries while doing qualitative research on the following: first, on men’s experiences of becoming disabled through playing sport, and second, on distance runners’ experiences of long-term injury and rehabilitation. But before moving in turn to each story, it is useful first to offer a theoretical prologue.

THEORETICAL PROLOGUE: WHAT IS DIALOGICAL RESEARCH, AND WHY MIGHT SPORT AND EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGISTS DO IT?

Questions salient to the paper include: How might we explore the ways in which we have oriented to boundaries while doing qualitative research? How might we tease out and theorize how close is too close to a research participant, how far is too far, and how do we know when we have gotten it “right?” One way, but certainly not the only way, is through narrative inquiry, in general, and theories of dialogue and monologue, in particular.

In recent years, as part of the “narrative turn” in the human sciences, scholars have begun to treat seriously the view that people structure experience through stories and that a person is essentially a story-telling animal (Frank, 2004; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Smith & Sparkes, 2008a, 2009). This has led to a more sophisticated appreciation of people as active social beings and focused attention on the ways in which personal and cultural realities are constructed, enabled, and constrained in relation to others through

dialogues and *monologues*. With regard to dialogue and monologue, like most binary distinctions, the difference between them is not “pure.” As Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) and Frank (2004, 2005b) point out, ultimately all storytelling and speech is dialogical inasmuch as all stories and speech contain remembered voices of others and orient to other people. Yet, as they also argue, the difference between monological and dialogical speech has practical value for thinking about what kind of people we are, want to be, and could be. Thus, monologue and dialogue are less an opposition than a continuum, but the differences between the ends of this continuum remain significant.

For Bakhtin (1984) and Frank (2004), *monologue* can be described as a self-narrative and bodily voice which believes that it alone is *self-sufficient*. The monological story speaks *about* relationships and truths about a world of which this voice claims privileged knowledge. It tells others what the speaker already knows and what the listener must learn. The speaker is at one end of the pipeline, the listener is at the other, and information—knowledge and truth—flows one way. Monologues, note Bakhtin and Frank, can also be characterized as a self-narrative seeking, explicitly or implicitly, to *merge* with the other. Here, an individual seeks to enter the other’s life, fuse the individual’s own self with the other, or assimilate the other to his/her own self, thereby abridging difference and distance between each other. Not only is this sense of mutual otherness abridged, but monological narratives also tend to claim the *finalizing* word—the last word—regarding events and people.

In moving toward dialogue, in contrast, no speaker is self-sufficient, merges with the other, or utters finalizing words. According to Bakhtin (1984), *dialogue* involves giving up the belief of self-sufficiency. This is partly because a person realizes his/her self initially through others: from them we receive stories, words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of our initial idea of ourselves. Just “as the body is formed initially in the mother’s womb (body), a person’s consciousness awakens wrapped in another’s consciousness” (p. 138). In this sense, a person’s stories and words about his/her self “are structured under the continuous influence of someone else’s words about him [sic]” (p. 207). Thus, under this schema, no matter how personally authentic anyone wants to be or wants to allow others to be, and no matter how separate from others we feel we might be, we are always fundamentally connected and exist in relation to other people. None of us is ever self-sufficient; two is the minimum number for the constitution of self. As such, dialogue can be only created *between* people and it requires mutual participation. One implication of all this is that no one speaker’s story, self, or voice is ever entirely her or his *own*; we exist only on the boundary with others. “Not that which takes place within,” Bakhtin proposes, “but that which takes place on the boundary between one’s and someone else’s consciousness, on the threshold” (1984, p. 287).

Furthermore, according to Bakhtin (1984, 1986), dialogue involves giving up not only the belief that one is self-sufficient but also the comforting illusion that any of us can, often out of sheer desire to help, merge with the other person. For Bakhtin (1990), this demand for not lapsing into merging with others is particularly important because it sustains difference. Using suffering as an example, he writes: “the other’s *suffering* as co-experienced by me is in principle different ... from the other’s suffering as he [sic]

experiences it" (1990, p. 102). Two is the minimum, but these two have to remain different; not apart, but distinct. This view of dialogue as involving, not merging with, another to sustain difference is reinforced by Clark and Holquist (1984) in the following comment:

The way in which I create myself is by means of a quest: I go out to the other in order to come back with a self. I "live into" an other's consciousness; I see the world through the other's eyes. But I must never completely meld with that version of things, for the more successfully I do, the more I will fall pray to the limits of the other's horizon. A complete fusion ... even if it were possible, would preclude the difference required for dialogue. (p. 78)

Therefore, according to Frank (2005a), seeking to merge with the other might seem generous, but "it risks losing the mutual otherness that sustains the boundary between persons and thus sustains a fundamental condition for dialogue—that it be between persons who remain mutually other" (p. 295). As such, sustaining sufficient difference and distance so that there can be space between people is important in understanding how humans relate to each other. In sum, dialogue can be described as a form of communication between simultaneous differences or horizons of understanding. And, from a narrative perspective, our lives and the stories we tell about them can be seen as social and knitted into not only monological relationships but also dialogical relations.

Having described what dialogue and monologue can mean, why might sport and exercise psychology professionals undertake narrative research framed by them? The dialogical and monological vineyard offers a rich harvest for those pursuing an understanding of our lives as both *personal* and *socio-cultural*, which is absent in many traditional psychological theories (Crossley, 2000; Gergen, 1999). For many, the attraction of narrative study lies in its promise to enable us to think about a person who is socially situated and culturally fashioned at the same time as that person expresses a unique individuality and an agency that makes him or her at once both shaped by society and shaping society (Smith & Sparkes, 2009).

Furthermore, athletes, coaches, applied practitioners, and researchers swim in a sea of sporting stories that they hear, read, listen to, and see. For example, during a research encounter, a sport psychology professional may ask an athlete to share stories of key moments in the athlete's career, such as stories of burnout, stories of coach-athlete relationships, stories of the ways in which sport parents influence their children's psychosocial outcomes in youth sport, or stories of injury and comeback. In doing so, they are actively involved in *co-constructing* stories by inviting stories and asking curiosity-driven questions that help thicken, deepen, and re-create existing stories. The stories that are told and received are therefore influenced and informed by what tellers, as well as the sport psychologist, bring to the relationship from their own lives and contexts. All of these notions contribute to a greater recognition of the importance of the relationship between the sport and exercise psychology professional and the athlete and between the knower and what is known (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Indeed, Bakhtinian theories of dialogue

and monologue encourage us to be reflexive about the ways we operate with athletes, research participants, et al., how the stories we invite from others and tell ourselves shape, enable, and constrain relationships, and how and what knowledge is created. Researchers may necessarily turn attention to the quality and patterns of interaction and the ethical ideals of respecting difference while striving for understanding.

Another reason why sport and exercise psychology professionals might use theories of dialogue and monologue is that through interaction with them our understandings of sporting experiences and lives can potentially become deeper and more complex. As Nisbett (1990) argues, reading outside, rather than exclusively within, one's own scientific discipline can greatly foster scientific creativity. Of course, this is neither easy nor straightforward. However, as scholars in what is arguably a privileged position, we believe it is a moral imperative to assume the responsibility to listen carefully and attempt to grasp what is being expressed and said in "alien" traditions. Indeed, the specter of all researchers marching to the same drummer of some orthodoxy does not thrill us with anticipation and should be a source of concern for those who see sport and exercise psychology as a theoretically vibrant domain, encouraging multiple and different voices to be heard and understood.

ANALYTIC METHOD: NARRATIVE PERFORMATIVE ANALYSIS

According to Riessman (2008), a performative analysis, or what is sometimes called a dialogic analysis, is concerned with, and directs researchers' attention to, examining how talk among speakers is relationally and interactively produced and performed as narrative. This type of narrative analysis involves a close reading of contexts, including the influence of the researcher and socio-cultural circumstances on the production and interpretation of narrative within a certain situation, such as an interview setting. The analyst "asks 'who' an utterance may be directed to, 'when,' and 'why,' that is, for what purposes?" (p. 105). A performative analysis thus shifts from the "told"—the events to which language refers—to include both the "doing" and "the telling." Cultural context, audiences for the narrative, and shifts in the interpreter's positioning over time are brought closely into focus. Riessman further points out that language—the particular words and styles narrators select to recount experiences—is interrogated in fine detail, not taken at face value.

In what follows, utilizing the analytic lenses provided by Bakhtin (1984, 1986), we present two stories based on sports-related research and subject them to a narrative performative analysis with the intent to explore how we orient to boundaries within qualitative research encounters and perform boundary crossing and re-crossing. Each story may perhaps be considered as too idealist. That is, "these things don't happen in real life." However, in our experience, they do hold verisimilitude (Sparkes, 2002). It should also be made clear that the voice(s) in the stories are those of White persons. It is to the first story we now turn.

BECOMING DISABLED THROUGH PLAYING SPORT: AN EXAMPLE OF SELF-CONSCIOUS BOUNDARY CROSSING

The first story is taken from field notes written by Brett Smith in his research, with Andrew Sparkes, on men's experiences of suffering a spinal cord injury (SCI) through playing sport (see Smith & Sparkes, 2005, 2008b). This story we use elucidates, for us, the use of a self-conscious boundary and some of the complex ways in which a researcher can be caught between getting too close to a participant and remaining too distant. For ease of reference, we have added numbers of reference to sections referred to in the narrative analysis that follows the story.

[1] Just finished interviewing Doug, a 38-year old man who, during a rugby game nine years ago, broke his neck. Lots of interesting things about him came up during the interview—his unwavering desire to walk again, his lack of desire to participate in disabled sport, and his fear of living in a disabled body. He also does not want help from others, but claims this is okay.

[2] But, one thing keeps pricking at me, and I can't let it go. Near the end of the interview, we were talking about his experiences of depression and how he feels living in his disabled body. I wanted to know what it felt like; I wanted to enter into his bodily world. I suddenly felt his bodily world of depression. I said to him, "Doug, I understand. I've lived with depression and struggle with it. Partly as a result of sporting injuries, depression has me too. I know how you feel. I know the future looks bad, but you will get better" [Interview transcripts confirm this.]

[3] A moment later, with tears welling up in both our eyes, I leaned across and gently squeezed his hand, holding it for a moment. He smiled and turned his palm to embrace my hand. An instant later, I felt, inside my body, the distance between us lessen. Our bodies briefly connected. Our damp palms were attached. I entered his sadness, and felt we became one.

[4] However, something felt wrong. Inside my gut, I knew I'd crossed a line between us. I didn't want an interview where we were distant from each other, but here I'd overstepped the boundary between us. With that feeling—that knowledge inside me—I suddenly felt sick. The nausea abruptly bubbling in my stomach was compounded by the idea, the imagination, that, "I knew how he felt and he could get better." A recent chat with a work colleague sprang to my mind in which he said that he knew how I felt to live in depression and that I should do exercise or sport because it helped him get out of his depression and research also proves this as a way of getting better. I thought to myself, "How dare he say he knows how I feel and tell me what I should do." Inside, I was furious.

[5] With that, I moved my hand, touched and gently squeezed his forearm, and we smiled to each other. I then said, "I really have no idea how you feel and what it means to live in your skin. I'm glad though that we're sharing time together and I'm speaking with you. I hope I can also pass on your stories to others."

[6] Doug responded by saying, "That would be good. I've enjoyed sharing stuff and time with each other and hope my stories might help others. We can all learn from each other after all and help each other through life rather than trying to be someone by ourselves."

Clearly, there are multiple ways in which we could interpret the above story. Our interpretation here, as read through a dialogical perspective as outlined by Bakhtin (1984) and Frank (2004), elucidates the use of a self-conscious boundary crossing to reveal myself (Brett Smith)¹ as a researcher performing in relation to a participant (Doug) grappling with the ongoing dilemma of how close is too close and how far is too far. In doing so, the story highlights the importance of dialogue and monologue in the process of getting too close and remaining too distant. That is, how boundary crossings can limit and sustain dialogues and monologues.

Specifically, the story shows a transition from monologue to dialogue and the costs and benefits associated with this. In the first segment [1], my voice breaks into and performs what can be called “traditional research talk.” I analyze and assess Doug with experiential authority and interpretive omnipotence, saying, “Lots of interesting things about him came up during the interview—his unwavering desire to walk again, his lack of desire to participate in disabled sport, and his fear of living in a disabled body. He also does not want help from others, but claims this is okay.” In these sentences, in this performance, I am not talking *with* Doug. I’m someone who has a monological voice, speaking *about* the other (Doug) who is characterized as an *object* of narration. In this monologue, developed through traditional research talk, Doug is finalized. He also becomes increasingly distant.

The second segment [2], as my story unfolds, suggests the monologue continues. This time, however, it is not simply developed through traditional research talk. “But,” I add, “one thing keeps pricking at me, and I can’t let it go. Near the end of the interview we were talking about his experiences of depression and how he feels living in his disabled body. I wanted to know what it felt like; I wanted to enter into his bodily world.” Now, I hint at a boundary crossing. As the sentences and performance of them develop, I move from a sense of distance to one of closeness. This move, though, is again monological. In seeking to enter and to know how it feels to live in body that is disabled due to playing sport and claiming that this has been done, I seemingly merge with Doug and infringe on his non-self-sufficiency.

This monologue expands further. I aim to empathize with Doug. However, in adding that I “suddenly felt his bodily world of depression” and saying “I know how you feel,” I persist in maintaining the comforting illusion that any of us can, often out of sheer desire to help and empathize, merge with another. As a result, there is a failure to recognize the limits of empathy. That is, there are aspects of Doug’s suffering that I can never know or feel. Equally, I cannot know the future because it is open. But, my monological voice cuts this up as I say, “I know the future looks bad, but you will get better.” Thus, not only do I merge with another and continue infringing on the mutual otherness that sustains the boundary between persons—I also finalize Doug.

A monologue principally continues in the third segment [3] of the story. Here, however, rather than privileging what is said verbally, a monological performance dominates and takes place at the level of what Frank (2005a) calls *body hexis*. That is, how bodies are held in relation to other bodies, their posture, tension, and touch. Of course, dialogue can take place through the body, and this is very briefly suggested when I

say, "A moment later, with tearing welling up in both our eyes, I leaned across gently squeezed his hand, holding it for a moment. He smiled and turned his palm to embrace my hand." Yet, this move toward dialogue through bodily touch is quickly interrupted by myself and turns back into monologue as I again merge with Doug by adding, "An instant later, I felt inside my body the distance between us lessen. Our bodies briefly connected. Our damp palms were attached. I entered his sadness." This monological performative voice is then strengthened by myself not only merging with Doug and getting too close in the process but also by lapsing into a voice of self-sufficiency; "I felt we became one." Thus, the boundary between being neither self-sufficient nor merging with the other, which sustains dialogue, is crossed. I get too close by infringing on the other's (Doug's) side and violating what makes him other. Accordingly, monologue dominates within the research encounter.

But as I continue the story [4], this monologue ends as abruptly as it began. "However," I carry on, in the bodily moment of touch, "something felt wrong. Inside my gut, I knew I'd crossed a line between us. I didn't want an interview where we were distant from each other, but here I'd overstepped the boundary between us." This is the moment I realize, internally, that I'm caught between getting too close to Doug and remaining too distant. I felt within my body that I'd overstepped our boundaries rather than getting into the boundary space between us that sustains dialogue. This embodied knowledge is reinforced as I recall a recent monologue with a work colleague in which the other said he knew "how I felt to live in depression and that I should do exercise or sport because it helped him get out of his depression and research also proves this as a way of getting better." Just like distance can grate on people who interpret it as not caring or not being interested, this closeness grated on me. The space *between* us, which sustains dialogue, was violated, and I was left finalized; "How dare he say he knows how I feel and tell me what I should do. Inside, I was furious."

With all this knowledge, the interview encounter as a performance is transformed. In segment five [5], the performance shifts from being primarily monological to being dialogical. Initially, this shift occurs by the body hexis of touch: "I moved my hand, touched and gently squeezed his forearm, and we smiled to each other." This dialogical relation is then sustained by myself when I say, "I've really no idea how you feel and what it means to live in your skin. I'm glad though that we're sharing time together and I'm speaking with you. I hope I can also pass on your stories to others." Early in the sentence, Doug and I become unmerged as concern with getting too close to Doug is expressed. As the talk unfolds, I suggest I not only *study* Doug, but that I spend *time* with him, thereby playing a part in his life and inviting Doug as a research participant genuinely to participate. This dialogical relation continues as I speak not *about* Doug but rather *with* him. Further, by hoping to share the other's stories, my voice is present in Doug's voice but still remains distinguishable. My voice thus never merges here with Doug, but neither voice is self-sufficient. I've gotten in there *between* myself and Doug as a research participant in an unfinalizing manner.

This dialogical quality, and the performance of it, is maintained in the sixth segment [6]. This is done by Doug, however, as he responds to me: "That would be good. I've

enjoyed sharing stuff and time with each other and hope my stories might help others. We can all learn from each other after all and help each other through life rather than trying to be someone by ourselves." Now Doug's voice is given authority. It a voice unmerged with mine. It is also one that treats others as non-self-sufficient and questions the monological freedom of the individual to become himself, *by himself*. Thus, like myself in the previous two segments, a balance between being neither self-sufficient nor merged goes some way to being achieved, which sustains the boundary between Doug and I, and the boundary sustains dialogue.

We will now consider the next story.

LONG-TERM INJURY AMONG DISTANCE RUNNERS: AN EXAMPLE OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC BOUNDARY NEGOTIATIONS

The second story performed and recounted is based on research log extracts written by Jacquelyn Allen Collinson and her co-researcher, John Hockey, as part of a two-year collaborative autoethnographic study of distance runners' experiences of long-term injury (see, Allen Collinson & Hockey, 2001).² In our analysis, we highlight the delicate and ongoing negotiation of self-other boundaries between two long-term training partners—and qualitative researchers—who by coincidence experienced very similar knee injuries during the same cross-country season. In an attempt to capture something positive out of what appeared at the time to be highly deleterious disruptions to athletic identities (Allen Collinson & Hockey, 2007), it was agreed to initiate the collaborative autoethnographic study. The following extracts are taken (with the permission of the author's co-researcher) from the individual injury-rehabilitation logs in which field notes were recorded, each participant seeking to act as the "primary recipient" (Ochs & Capps, 1996) of the other's data.

It should be explained that, in addition to the individual logs kept by the researchers, a joint log was also compiled, within which analytical themes and concepts were generated. For example, if one of us had documented a particular narrative theme, the other's log would be examined for similar or related themes. Subsequently, the precise composition of that theme, its constituents, boundaries, and connections to other themes already generated would be analyzed. Thematic or conceptual differences between the accounts were identified and, wherever possible, reconciled, in terms of definition. The field note extracts below record individual responses to the same incident when one participant, John, endured an acute and painful set-back in his rehabilitative program, and the author, Jacquelyn (hereafter I, me, and so on), reflects in her field notes on her responses and attempts to regulate her own emotions in order to offer more effective support to her running partner. Again, for ease of reference, numbers are appended to sections referred to in the subsequent narrative analysis.

John's field note:

[1] Yesterday evening we had a bad patch ... We negotiated a small patch both up and down, everything seemed ok, until about 50 yards on my knee began to STAB me very sharply ... I pull up quickly, taking the weight on my good leg, full of dread. I sit on

the ground and explode with frustration, furious expletives darken the air repeatedly. J comes over quickly to give me support. I berate my knee, I berate our decision to add in the pitch to the program (“idiot, idiot, it was all too soon, I knew we shouldn’t have done it”). My frustration bubbles over as I glance at the micro tape recorder in her hand: “Don’t you dare turn that fucking thing on!” She moves around me smoothing me down with her words; it takes her an age. I limp home awkwardly; she gives me a cuddle on the way.

Jacquelyn’s related fieldnote:

[2] J has just had a really difficult run. We attempted a very small incline for the first time, just to test the knees a little to see if they would cope with the slope ... then suddenly J had a vicious, stabbing pain in his knee, which forced him to pull up immediately.

[3] [J is] Understandably furious ... Really concerned about J, he was obviously in pain, absolutely livid, and it could have set him back weeks ... I didn’t know whether to hug him or to stand back and give him some breathing space. Tried to be sympathetic, but also calming and supportive and positive. Took all my energies, but I know just how he feels.

[4] [Later that evening] ... J has been icing up the knee at regular intervals until the skin turns the requisite degree of pink. We are both incredibly anxious, what if ... what if ...? “It’ll be fine, bud, it’s probably just a tweak and will settle down by the morning.” As soon as the words are spoken, though, I know they are more in faith and hope than anything. “Let’s hope so,” I add fervently so as not to frustrate him further.

While the above field notes could be analyzed and interpreted in myriad ways, use of the dialogical perspective highlights—as in Brett’s story above—the shifting self-other boundaries of the performative, interactional encounter. The story also highlights the narrative fluctuations between monological and dialogical modes and between finalizing/unfinalizing practices and utterances. The first sentence of segment two [2], for example, indicates a monological voice being performed as I assess what has occurred during the training session: “J has just had a really difficult run.” Here, I’m talking *about* John, assessing the difficulty of the experience *for* him; he is the objectified focus of this part of the narrative, and a degree of distance is evident in the relative “neutrality” of the initial statement. However, a more metaphoric portrayal of John’s pain subsequently signals my more empathetic stance in describing his pain: “... then suddenly J had a vicious, stabbing pain in his knee, which forced him to pull up immediately.” Although it is unclear from this segment whether these are John’s descriptors of his pain or my evaluation, the words “STAB” [1] and “stabbing” [2] suggest that some verbal interchange regarding the nature of the pain took place and narrative congruence was established regarding the nature of the pain.

In the third segment [3], my words reflect a degree of merging, as I record my acknowledgement that John is “[u]nderstandably furious,” hinting at my belief in an imagined shared lived-body experience and emotional response, in that, were I to find myself in the same position, I’d probably express the very same emotional response. Bakhtin (1990), however, warns of the illusion that we can, even in our desire to help,

merge with the other, while Frank (2004) portrays as generous the dialogic relationship in which participants do not seek to merge with the other. This unmerging allows for the acknowledgement of shared lived experience but also of difference and distance so that each person has the self-space not to share the same identity but to share affinities.

The tendency toward narrative merging is quickly followed [3] by a return to a clearly monological voice as I again talk *about* John as object: "Really concerned about J, he was obviously in pain, absolutely livid and it could have set him back weeks ...," re-establishing some degree of distance (Frank, 2004). Reflexivity then pervades the field note as I reflect upon my own indecisiveness in knowing what was best to do *for* John, a self-dialogical voice emerges as I debate with myself the options of which *body hexis* (Frank, 2005a) to adopt: "I didn't know whether to hug him or to stand back and give him some breathing space." The self-analysis proceeds as the fieldnote [3] records, "Tried to be sympathetic, but also calming and supportive and positive. Took all my energies ..." Although the stated intention was to be "sympathetic," my reflections and self-doubt demonstrate a degree of awareness of the limits of sympathy and empathy, a respecting of a degree of mutual otherness, and the need for John to retain his own space (both physical and interactional). This serves to maintain the dialogical space between us.

The final sentence of the fieldnote [3], however, returns to a monological performance in my emphatic, colonizing statement to self, "but I know just how he feels." Although there might indeed have been similarities in experiences of the injury and rehabilitation processes, as articulated both at the time and subsequently during data analysis, nevertheless, there were clearly elements of these processes that were highly specific and individual to each participant and could never be fully known or felt by the other, however much s/he might have believed them to be shared. My empathetic projection ("I know just how he feels"), even though not uttered to John himself, reflects my presumption of shared feelings, experiences, and emotions, which infringes upon the boundaries between persons and moves toward merger with, and colonization of, John.

In the final segment [4], in an attempt later that evening to comfort and encourage my frustrated and despondent training partner, I state: "It'll be fine, bud, it's probably just a tweak and will settle down by the morning," but then pauses to reflect almost immediately—"As soon as the words are spoken"—that there is hollowness in the words; they represent more of a wish than a statement of fact—"they are more in faith and hope than anything." The monologic utterance is finalizing in its quasi-diagnostic phrasing: "It'll be fine, bud, it's probably just a tweak and will settle down by the morning," which seems to pre-judge the outcome of the suspected new set-back and to finalize John and all his interpretations of the incident.

Reflecting subsequently with discomfort on this statement, it brings back memories of a recent brief interchange by text message with a close friend after I underwent a medical diagnostic test. The friend, doubtless with the best of intentions to be encouraging and reassuring, responded to my anxious text upon leaving the consultation with what was then perceived to be a curt and dismissive: "It'll be fine," and then proceeded to mention some item of work news. Similarly to Brett's instance, this evoked the hot fury

and resentment of the moment, of being “closed down” and denied the legitimacy of feelings, of being finalized. In the fieldnote [4], a shift toward undoing such finalizing is performed relatively quickly. As I recognize inwardly the error and inadequacy of my words, with the hasty addendum of, “Let’s hope so”, I re-open the dialogic space and counter the previous “closing” statement of: “It’ll be fine...”. Thus, it is acknowledged that there is a need to honor John’s unfinalizability and the openness and “unknowability” of the future.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Drawing on the theories of dialogue and monologue, in this article we presented two stories based on sports research and analyzed them through a performative narrative analysis with the intent to explore how people orient to boundaries within research encounters and perform boundary crossing and re-crossing. It has highlighted the fluidly shifting dynamics of sustaining and crossing boundaries and how this ongoing process is shaped by dialogical and monological relations. In doing so, we suggest that questions concerning “how close is too close” to research participants and “how far is too far” from them are neither simple nor straightforward. They are complex and context-dependent, shifting in time and space, ebbing and flowing, as people move between merging and unmerging, self-sufficiency and non-self-sufficiency, and finalizing and un-finalizing practices.

At the same time, in this article we reveal how research practices can move from being colonizing to being de-colonizing. That is, colonization can partly occur through monologues because in them there is a merging with the other, the other is treated as self-sufficient, and is finalized. When people speak in a monological voice, they infringe on the other’s side, violate what makes them other, and utter final words that rule out all competing voices and close down who the other might be in the future. De-colonization, however, may take place in dialogue. This is because in dialogical relations bodies are unmerged, non-self-sufficiency is respected, and the other’s unfinalizability is honored. Therefore, the practice of monologue can result in colonization while dialogical relations can be practices that de-colonize research. That said, none of this is to presuppose some dichotomy between colonizing/de-colonizing research. Such a presupposition is problematic because practices that utter monological and dialogical words are fluid, shifting, and dynamic. Thus, colonizing and de-colonizing research practices are perhaps best viewed along a continuum and as involving an ongoing and dynamic process of dialogue and monologue.

With all this in mind, the question regarding what might be the implications of boundaries and theories of dialogue in relation to sport and exercise psychology and de-colonizing methods still remains. We offer two interrelated points.³ The first relates to *empathy*. In terms of de-colonizing methods and qualitative research, empathy is important. For example, striving to be empathetic during interviews is a potential way to minimize colonizing the other and respect the otherness. Likewise, as Kvale (1996) and Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest in relation to qualitative interviewing, empathy can be

important because it may increase our ability to understand better the other person, engender rapport, generate “rich” data, and thereby help obtain significant knowledge of the human situation. Thus, empathy is held up as something for which sport and exercise psychology professionals—both in research interviews and applied practice—should often strive. Bakhtin’s (1984, 1986, 1990) theories of dialogue reinforce this.

At the same time, however, they also invite us to be acutely aware of the *limits* of empathy. As Frank (2005a) points out, “Dialogue begins with empathy, but sustaining dialogue requires recognition of the limits of empathy ... A human life is lived between the threats of inflicting or having inflicted upon us two complementary forms of violence” (p. 298). One form is the routine violence of isolation that comes from treating ourselves, and treating others, as self-sufficient. Much like many psychological theories of the self, it treats the other person as autonomous and acting from inherent qualities located within the self. In doing so, it too conveniently ignores that people often act in response to how they perceive they are being treated. The complementary violence, adds Frank, is to treat the other person as feeling what I feel. Here, as in Brett’s story above, empathy can easily turn into projection, or sometimes introjection, which is another illusion of merging with the other person. As Frank notes, “The former, routine violence of isolation claims that you are as you are, and I have no effect on you being that way. The latter violence of empathetic projection claims that you are as I am, and I *know* how you feel” (p. 299).

Others have also noted that we should recognize the limits of empathy. For example, Rubin and Rubin (1995) offered the following caution to researchers and applied professionals: “You may find that the borderline between showing empathy for another person, listening with concern and belief, and overrapport, identifying so much with those you study that you forget who you are, is easily crossed” (p. 119). More recently, Mackenzie and Scully (2007) suggested that there are difficulties and dangers with attempts to empathize when one aspires to merge with the other by imaginative projection (e.g., imagining being another or “in the other’s shoes”):

The difficulty of empathetic imagining is that it requires us to be able to adopt the other person’s perspective as unselfconsciously as we adopt our own when we imagine from our own point of view. It also requires us to be able to predict what the other person would think and do in the myriad situations she might encounter, and to reproduce and anticipate her emotional responses. Perhaps even more problematically...it requires us to be able to inhabit the other’s embodied modes of engagement with the world. (pp. 341-342)

None of this, however, is to say that empathy should be abandoned. On the contrary, empathetic imaginative engagement with the perspectives of others does play an important role in developing moral emotions and in exercising moral judgment as part of de-colonizing methods. That said, there are also dangers attached to assuming one can empathize with the other by imagining merging with them. For instance, we may simply end up projecting our own perspective on to the other, rather than responding to

the other as other, thereby colonizing them. Likewise, for Mackenzie and Scully (2007), even if one is well-intentioned, one may end up projecting one's own fears and hopes onto the other, misrepresenting the other person's views and needs, and arriving at moral judgments that are inappropriate, paternalistic, and colonizing. Thus, there are both benefits and dangers attached to empathy. One can easily move from a de-colonizing practice to a colonizing practice. Given this, rather than taking it for granted as something one should perform at all times and see as always beneficial, sport and exercise psychology professionals may need to be reflexive about the limits of empathy. Theories of dialogue can help with this.

Second, dialogic theories point us to another possibility in relation to how we might move from colonizing methods toward de-colonizing methods. This possibility revolves around moving from practices that are *finalizing* to *un-finalizing*. Finalization, as outlined by Bakhtin (1984) and Frank (2004), can be as described as someone uttering words that claim the last word, the definitive, final word, about those who fall within their purview. One example of finalization is when a person responds to another in research reports, interviews, or clinical practice by saying such things as, "You are *definitely* depressed because of your serious sporting injury and *need* to be treated. You *should* see a sport psychologist or therapist, *definitely* engage in exercise, and then you *will* get better. The future *is* good for you. You *will* be back playing or running." Likewise, finalization can occur when a person claims, for instance in research reports, that there is nothing more to be said about subjects or participants, concludes with certainty and offers causal descriptions, or writes that the other will be the same as they have always been and will not change.

Therefore, one potential consequence of finalization is colonization. For example, because finalized monologues claim authority and to speak truths about a world of which a person claims privileged (and often White) knowledge, monological finalization can silence other voices, thereby moving toward colonization. To add context to this example in relation to sport psychology, consider the following: A sport and exercise psychology professional working with or interviewing a disabled male may want to hear stories about "heroic recovery" and regaining a "performing body" following a spinal cord injury. In part, this may be because it is the story the professional prefers and is the one that follows the heroic, masculine, and White models of Western sport in which the professional has been enculturated. In other words, it is the personal and cultural ontology the professional desires to hear. However, if the professional imposes these on to participants, not only may the sport and exercise psychology professional be complicit in sustaining and reproducing existential and culturally preferred stories that might be disempowering and problematic, but he may also interfere with people's rights to tell their own tales, tales that may lack the coherence, plot, or resolution the individual, and (sub)culture, desires. In this light, as the preference for a certain story is imposed on to participants, it finalizes them which, in turn, can result in colonization of subjectivity and misrepresentation of the cultural other.

Furthermore, finalization can lead to colonization because uttering the final word on a person can foreclose the options to live in a different way. The individual may likewise

be left feeling that there is nothing more in her, nothing more to be said about her, and there are no other prospects. Thus, according to Bakhtin, to finalize the other person is not only an empirically inadequate description of the human condition, but it can leave that person "hopelessly determined and finished off, as if he [*sic*] were already quite dead" (p. 58). For Bakhtin, all that is unethical begins and ends when one human being claims to determine all that another is and can be; when one person claims that the other has not, cannot, and will not change, that she or he will die just as she or he always has been. In doing so, colonization can result.

Given that one potential consequence of finalization is colonization, a move toward un-finalization may be pertinent. One possible way to do this is through speaking *with* the other, not just *about* the person (Frank, 2004). Likewise, when considering how to engage in un-finalized dialogical relations in sport and exercise psychology, professionals may avoid saying of another during an interview or while writing, "This is who such a person *is*." One can say, at most, "This is how I see this person now, but I cannot know what she or he will *become*." Indeed, dialogue depends on perpetual openness to the other's capacity to *become someone other* than whoever she or he already is. Another way sport and exercise psychology professionals *might* do un-finalized dialogical relations is to pass on unsettling questions through the tales they write (e.g., realist tales, autoethnographies), rather than seeking final answers and settling for those which are typical of colonizing practices inherent in monological works.

Further, researchers may represent their research as part of an ongoing process that is evaluated as *inconclusive*, or as *open ended*, which in dialogical theory is both empirically correct and ethically appropriate (Frank, 2005b). Indeed, in Bakhtin's (1984) dialogical ideal, our methodological representations of research could be understood not as final statements of whom the research participants are but as one move in a continuing dialogue through which those participants will continue to form themselves, as they continue to become who they may yet be. This line of argument brings Bakhtin to the view that is, for him, a principle of ethics and empirically adequate research: "As long as a person is alive he [*sic*] lives by the fact that he is not yet finalized, that he has not yet uttered his ultimate word" (p. 59). Accordingly, when using various methods such as interviews, analytic strategies, and writing in different ways, sport and exercise psychology professionals might consider shifting from monologues that finalize a person toward dialogic words that do *not* finalize them.

With such points in mind, we hope that this article encourages sport and exercise psychology professionals to consider theories of dialogue and monologue. In the spirit of dialogic relations, it is intended not as the final word or the model for others to simply follow. Instead, this article seeks to act as an invitation and opening for sport and exercise psychologists to take seriously the relationships in which they engage, how they orientate to boundaries, and the consequences this may have for themselves and others. We look forward to engaging in dialogue with others.

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ENDNOTES

¹ In what follows, rather than writing in the third person, we refer to Brett Smith, and then Jacquelyn Allen Collinson in the next story, in the first person. Thus, first person terms, like "I" or "me," are used in each story to represent each respective author. This representational strategy was chosen because writing in the third person may create the impression that we are objective. We wanted to foreground ourselves as embodied, personalized, and subjective (Sparkes, 2002).

² For an overview of autoethnography in sport see Sparkes (2002). It is sufficient to say that autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.

³ These points are, of course, not exhaustive. For example, readers of this article may see a connection with, and in the future wish to tease out issues with regard to, Relational Cultural Theory. Given the current voices of the article are the unspoken, normative (fe)male White voice, troubling issues of diversity in relation to boundaries may be another point to consider in the future.