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Writing People: Reflections on the Dual Crises of Representation and Legitimation in Qualitative Inquiry

Andrew C. Sparkes

This paper begins with a focus on the crisis of representation within qualitative inquiry and its implications for how authors write themselves and others in and out of their texts in physical education (PE) and sport. The rhetorical dimensions of research accounts and how they act as persuasive fictions are highlighted. Specific attention is given to how issues of voice(s) and author positioning are dealt with in the tales told by different research traditions. A range of alternative tales in PE and sport are considered, including confessional and impressionist tales, narratives of the self, poetic representations, ethnographic drama, and ethnographic fictions. The crisis of legitimation is then considered in detail. Researchers need to develop a reflexive self-awareness regarding the rhetorical and stylistic conventions of the tales they tell in order to bring the tales within the author's explicit and methodological understandings.

Qualitative researchers need to be storytellers. That, rather than any disdain for number crunching, ought to be one of their distinguishing attributes. To be able to tell (which, in academia, essentially means to be able to write) a story well is crucial to the enterprise. When we cannot engage others to read our stories—our completed and complete accounts—then our efforts at descriptive research are for naught. (Wolcott, 1994, p. 17)

In a recent review of the history of qualitative research this century Denzin and Lincoln (1994) spoke of five key moments, of which the third (1970–1986), following the traditionalist period and the modernist phase, was characterized by a blurring of genres. This involved a softening of boundaries between different arts, between science and art, between fact and fiction, and between different

Andrew C. Sparkes is with the School of Education at the University of Exeter, Exeter, Devonshire, EX1 2LU, U.K.

academic disciplines so as to make possible the uses of writing styles and genres that would have been previously considered inferior or nonliterary. During the mid-1980s a profound rupture occurred signaling the arrival of the fourth moment that was characterized by a crisis of representation. According to Marcus and Fischer (1986), this crisis arose from a growing uncertainty regarding the adequate means to describe social reality and led to a reassessment of dominant ideas across the human sciences. It was not just the ideas themselves that came under attack but also the paradigmatic style in which ideas were represented in terms of how researchers "write" (explain, describe, index) the social. In relation to this, Geertz (1988) commented as follows:

> The gap between engaging others where they are and representing them where they aren't, always immense but not much noticed, has suddenly become extremely visible. What was once technically difficult, getting "their" lives into "our" works, has turned morally, politically, even epistemologically, delicate. (p. 130)

The crisis of representation remains in the form of a continued questioning of the assumption that qualitative researchers can directly capture lived experience. Such lived experience is now taken to be *created* in the social text by the researcher, which means that the link between text and experience has become increasingly problematic. The crisis of representation is coupled with a *crisis of legitimation* that, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), problematizes the traditional criteria used to evaluate qualitative research; a serious rethinking of such terms as *validity*, *generalizability*, and *reliability* becomes necessary. These interrelated crises operate in tandem to define and shape the fifth moment of qualitative research which is fueled by, and embedded in, the discourses of postmodernism and poststructuralism.[1] This process serves to confront qualitative researchers in the social sciences with a host of problems relating to how language operates in all stages of their inquiry, from fieldwork to the production of the final report.

In keeping with the linguistic or rhetorical turns in social theory influenced by postmodernism/poststructuralism, language is no longer seen as a transparent medium through which the world may be experienced and expressed. Similarly, neither speech nor writing is taken to furnish a privileged, neutral mechanism of representation. Atkinson (1992) states the problem as follows:

> Language is always "incomplete." It does not give us an exhaustive description of the physical or social world. However "factual" or "realistic" a text appears to be, it is inescapably dependent on the conventions of reading and writing that its producer and consumers bring to bear. (p. 38)

Language, therefore, is a constitutive force that creates a particular view of reality.

No textual staging can ever be innocent. Whose voices are included in the text, and how they are given weight and interpreted, along with questions of priority and juxtaposition, are not just textual strategies but are political concerns that have moral consequences. How we as researchers choose to write about others has profound implications, not just for how readable the text is but also for how the people the text portrays are "read" and understood. Not surprisingly,

in recent years increased attention has been given to the process of writing as it transports the researcher from the "context of discovery" to the "context of presentation" (Plath, 1990). The product of inquiry—the written account—is now under intense scrutiny.[2]

There are signs that the dual crises of the fifth moment in qualitative research have begun to touch the world of physical education (PE) and sport.[3] In this paper, I want to consider in detail the crisis of representation and its implications for how we write about people in PE and sport. In doing so, I wish to problematize the dominant form of representation currently used by qualitative researchers and indicate how a reliance upon one particular style of writing may undermine any attempt to offer truly different tales to those of positivist and postpositivist accounts. By focusing upon the power dynamics embedded in issues of authorial presence and voices in the text, I attempt to substantiate such claims and provide a stimulus for experimentation with a range of genres so that not only will we, as researchers, study people "in the round" (Maguire, 1991), but we will also write about them and ourselves "in the round" as part of a research community spoken and written from many sites. Such a community, it is hoped, would celebrate ambiguity and competing discourses along with different voices and visions (Bain, 1990a).

As I explore the problems of representation associated with telling different tales, I simultaneously attempt to interweave issues relating to the crisis of legitimation before focusing upon this issue in more detail. I intend to make the case, following Rosaldo (1993), that classic forms of representation should not be simplistically discarded, but should be displaced, becoming only one among a number of viable forms of social description.

Before one can displace classic forms of representation, one must understand how they are constructed. In this respect, I have found it useful to think of all research reports as examples of what Strathern (1987, p. 251) calls *persuasive fictions* that employ specific literary strategies. For her, marking a piece of writing as "literary" is like marking out a person as having a "personality":

> Obviously, insofar as any piece of writing aims for a certain effect, it must be a literary production. . . . So whether a writer chooses (say) a "scientific" style or a "literary" one signals the kind of fiction it is; there cannot be a choice to eschew fiction altogether. (pp. 256-257)[4]

The notion of persuasive fiction is also important since it forces a recognition of the rhetorical features in any piece of scholarly writing, as the author attempts to establish a relationship with readers and convince them of the status of the "findings" (Atkinson, 1990; Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey, 1987; Sparkes, 1991, 1992d).

An important part of this persuading relates to how the voices of subjects are integrated, and the author positioned, in the final text; that is, how people get written in and out of the account. To illustrate this point, I will briefly outline the rhetorical features of the standard scientific tale before comparing this to the realist tale currently favored by qualitative researchers. In making this comparison I hope to indicate some striking, and unsettling, similarities between the two kinds of tale before going on to consider a range of alternatives that qualitative researchers might experiment with in the future.

Scientific Tales and the Absent Author

Various authors have focused on the conventions of scientific writing and have noted that the apparent absence of style in such tales is a rhetorical device in its own right (Eisner, 1988; Firestone, 1987; Mulkay, 1991; Richardson, 1990a, 1991; Woolgar, 1988). The "style of no style" is the style of science. The stripped-down, abstracted, detached form of language; the impersonal voice; and the statement of conclusions as propositions or formulae involves a realist or externalizing technique that objectifies through depersonalization. This technique allows the text to give the impression that its symbols are inert, neutral representations that exist quite independently of the interests and efforts of the researcher, who is presented as a neutral and disengaged analyst.

Textual strategies such as these play a crucial persuasive function within a research community that believes a major threat to the validity of any conclusion is likely to come from the writer's own bias. As Woolgar (1988) argues, "The scientist needs to be the trusted teller of the tale but, at the same time, should not be seen as intruding upon the object" (p. 75). To create this impression, a textual voice needs to be used that renders the actions of scientists passive and portrays entities like observations, results, and information as the prime movers.

For the intended audience of peers to be convinced, the scientist's contribution needs to be seen as essentially coincidental with the unfolding realization about the objective state of the world. The impression is that any other scientist in the same situation would have been led to the same conclusion. Essentially, in keeping with positivistic assumptions regarding epistemology and ontology, this form of language has to create the impression of knower and known as separate entities. To this end, much use is made of powerful metaphors. Richardson (1991) identified three in particular that are regularly used to remove the "datum" from the temporal and human practices that produce it so that human beings, both researcher and the other, are metaphored out of this world:

> First, is the grammatical split between subject and object, a wholly unnoticed metaphor for the separation between "real" subjects and objects. The metaphor is particularly powerful because it is part of our language structure. Second, empiricism views language as a *tool*. The empiricist world is fixed and available for viewing through the instrumentality of language, downplaying that *what* we speak about is partly a function of *how* we speak. Third, empiricism uses a *management* metaphor. Data are "managed," variables are "manipulated," research is "designed," time is "flow-charted," "tables" are "produced," and "models" (like toothpaste and cars) are "tested." The three metaphors work together to reify a radical separation between subject and object and to create a static world, fixed in time and space. In this world, the "knower" is estranged from the "known," intellectual inquiry becomes a matter of precise observation and measurement of what is "objectively" out there. (pp. 8-9)

Scientific tales constitute powerful and persuasive fictions in Western culture, and their value should not be underestimated. However, as indicated, they tend to provide what Geertz (1988) has called *author-evacuated texts*: The author is everywhere but nowhere, and the voices of others tend to be present only i

quantified form as, for example, when oral responses to questionnaires are translated into researcher categories for statistical analysis and presentation. Having said this, it is important to recognize that much that claims to be qualitative research (minus the emphasis upon quantified data) also draws upon textual strategies that are similar to those just outlined. To illustrate this point the following section focuses upon how realist tales are used in qualitative inquiry.[5]

Qualitative Inquiry and the Dominance of Realist Tales

The basic philosophical assumptions and interests of the research traditions located within the qualitative paradigm, and certain traditions within the critical paradigm, are profoundly different from those contained within the positivist and postpositivist paradigms.[6] This leads authors using qualitative traditions to report their work differently, draw upon different discourses, and utilize different rhetorical strategies to persuade the reader that their accounts are authoritative. Having said this, there is not any great sense of uniformity in the way qualitative researchers report their work. As Meloy (1993) argues, "Beyond the how to books, there are still few agreed upon written formats, writing guidelines, or stylistic suggestions for neophyte qualitative researchers to emulate" (p. 317).

Given qualitative researchers' basic assumptions and interests, the creation of authoritative texts for these researchers is extremely problematic and a source of constant tension. This is particularly so in relation to the issue of "voice(s)" in the text. For example, Woolgar (1988) points out that the discourse of the natural sciences tends to deny its objects a voice:

> Although electrons, particles and so on are credited with various attributes, they are constituted as incapable of giving opinions, developing their own theories and, in particular for our purposes, producing their own representations. The natural science discourse thus constitutes its objects as quintessentially docile and can act upon them at will. (p. 80)

In contrast, he notes that various traditions in the social sciences wish to grant their objects a voice (and refer to them as "subjects"): "This generates difficulties for the rhetorical constitution of distance. In particular, in the discourse associated with interpretive social science, subjects/objects are granted the ability to talk back, to have their own opinions, and even to constitute their own representations" (Woolgar, 1988, p. 80).

In view of this, it is interesting to note the dominance of realist tales within qualitative research into PE and sport.[7] Van Maanen (1988) suggests that realist tales are characterized by specific conventions, including *experiential author(ity)* in which the most striking feature is the almost complete absence of the author from the segments of the finished text: "Only what members of the studied culture say and do and, presumably, think are visible in the text" (p. 46). Once the researcher has finished the job of collecting the data, he or she simply vanishes. There is a marked absence of the narrator as a first-person presence in the text that becomes dominated by a "scientific" narrator who is manifest only as a dispassionate, camera-like observer (Marcus & Cushman, 1982). In

summarizing the location of authorial voice and positioning in realist tales, Cole (1991) comments:

> Ethnographic realism corresponds to scientistic conventions that construct authority and objectivity through passive voice, obscuring and apparently distancing the author from the data. The writer's voice is set apart from the main text in prefaces, method sections, and footnotes as a device to indicate that a dispassionate observer "was there, saw, and knows," asserting a contradictory "disembodied" objective presence and "experiential" authority. The researcher constructs and positions him/herself as a conduit through which an "other" culture is seemingly symmetrically decoded and recoded. (p. 39)

Another convention of realist tales according to Van Maanen (1988) is the production of the *native's point of view*. It is common to find extensive, closely edited quotations in the text that suggest the views put forward are not those of the author but are the authentic and representative remarks of those people in the culture under study. This is closely linked to the issue of *interpretive omnipotence*. Here, the author has the final word in realist ethnographies as to how the culture will be interpreted and how it will be presented. Van Maanen (1988) outlines several conventions associated with interpretive omnipotence. For example, a cultural description is often tied to a specific theoretical problem of interest to the researcher's disciplinary community. Field data are then put forward as facts marshaled in accordance with the light they shed on this topic of interest and the researcher's stand on the matter. The author's interpretation is made compelling by the use of abstract definitions, axioms, and theorems that work logically to provide explanation. Each element of the theory is carefully illustrated by empirical field data and is convincing insofar as the reader is willing to grant power to the theory. Essentially, as Tedlock (1987) points out,

> even when a few native lines do appear they seem to have been inserted for the sake of illustrating some point the author was already trying to make. . . . The only kind of dialogue they put out front in ethnographies is one in which the natives speak briefly, on cue, and in harmony with the views of anthropologists. (p. 325)

A further device for establishing interpretive credibility is the researcher resting the case on what the members say and do themselves. Data are presented conventionally as the events of everyday life. These situations, along with a generalized rendering of the subject's point of view, are collapsed into explanatory constructs in such a way that the researcher's analysis overlaps with (if it does not become identical to) the terms and constructs used to describe the events. In such situations, as Van Maanen (1988) comments, the author's authority is embellished by utilizing the native's vernacular to suggest that the author is fully able to whistle native tunes. In summarizing these conventions, Cole (1991) notes the following:

> The account is given increased legitimacy through representations of actual subject voices selected and excluded based on their consistency with the

author's "report." While a sense of authenticity and objectivity permeate the narrative, the ethnographer translates the voices and visions of local subjects into his/her own. The analysis (or the view from above) is bounded and legitimated by monitoring incongruent voices or anomalous moments; thus, fixing and stabilizing theory and limiting alternative interpretations by readers. (p. 40)

Although the voices of subjects are certainly present in realist tales, they are usually orchestrated to serve the theoretical needs of an absent, disembodied author. As a consequence, there is often a tendency to produce texts that portray people as "flat" unidimensional, highly stable, and predictable characters, as opposed to multidimensional, "rounded" characters (see Atkinson, 1990; Evans, 1992). Furthermore, as Van Maanen (1988) recognizes, the realist tale only offers one reading and culls its facts with care to support that reading: "It is simply a matter of closing off or nailing down an interpretation without allowing alternative views to creep into view" (p. 53).

Although there are differences between realist and scientific tales, there are also some startling similarities, particularly in terms of both being *author-evacuated* texts. As Young (1991) points out, in relation to the conventions of realist writing, this bodily withdrawal from the realms of events, or disembodiment in it, leaves behind the spoor of the voyeur: "Though the body vanishes, its perceptual apparatus, especially the eyes remains. Ethnographic writing instantiates an invisible perceiver in a visible world. . . . No vagaries of flesh compound perception. . . . The text purports to become a transparency to the realm of events" (pp. 221-223). The absent author in realist tales and the manner in which such tales support a kind of textual positivism has been the source of much debate in recent years. I now want to turn to some of the issues raised in this debate.

The Politics of Text: Power, Privilege, and Exploitation

Realist tales, like scientific tales, serve particular purposes, are useful in their own right, and have a long and worthy pedigree. They will continue to contribute to the understanding of PE and sport in the future. Having said this, a postmodernist/poststructuralist critique of realist tales would include concerns over the absent author in an author-evacuated text. This absence is puzzling given the general recognition within qualitative inquiry regarding the centrality of the "researcher as instrument" that calls for the engagement of the individual researcher's *self* with the people involved in the inquiry at a variety of levels (Ball, 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Furthermore, if it is taken that this self is multidimensional and always positioned in relation to others from a particular standpoint, a number of important questions are raised, which according to Richardson (1992c) include the following:

> Whose authority counts when? How can/should authorship be claimed? Where do validity/credibility/reliability fit? How does one's writing reflect one's social privileges? What part of my biography, my process is relevant to text writing? How do I write myself into the text without being self-absorbed or unduly narcissistic? How can I write so that others' "voices" are not only heard but listened to? For whom should we write? What consequences does our work have for the people we study, and what are my ethical responsibilities for those consequences? These are not only my personal issues; they are ones that engage (enrage) both feminist and postmodernist researchers. (p. 108)

In response to such questions, both Coe (1991) and Richardson (1992c) suggest that researchers-as-authors need to indicate their positioning in relation to the research process and the other people involved. They also suggest that researchers should engage in a self-reflexive analysis of the social categories to which they belong (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class, gender, age, ableness, and sexual orientation) since these enter into and shape what constitutes knowledge in any project. Consequently, an author needs to be written into, and not out of, the text. This is an important issue because, although many qualitative researchers seem happy to write narratives that situate the subjects of inquiry in culturally and historically specific locations, these researchers appear less assured about recognizing that they as authors also write from specific historical and cultural locations and are infused by the social categories to which they belong. Such acknowledgments would openly challenge the realist tale's conception of the researcher-as-author as a disembodied, neutral voice, a universal human subject outside of history who is hermetically sealed off from social categories.

In relation to this, Dewar (1993) has argued that, as part of a rethinking of feminist analyses of sport utilizing standpoint theory, authors need to acknowledge how their interpretations and writing are embedded in systems characterized by structured inequalities and various forms of oppression. Dewar's own analysis, which deconstructs the notion of the generic woman in sport, does just this, and it problematizes the relationship between women as subjects, researchers, and authors who can be differently privileged in relation to each other:

> Having privilege because of my white skin, anglophone heritage, age, body size, class, physical ability, and Christian heritage influences how I do my work. The challenge I face is to understand how sexism and lesbian oppression are shaped by other forms of oppression. This means recognizing that there are times when my voice will be heard and listened to because of the privilege that I have, which in turn means considering if, why, and how I exercise that privilege. It also means that there are times when I need to be silent, listen, and take responsibility for learning. As a first step this means that I must include and integrate different voices into my teaching and writing. (Dewar, 1993, p. 222)

Issues of power and privilege and the potential for exploitation within a research process characterized by systematic inequalities have been central concerns for scholars from a variety of disciplines. This is particularly so for those who are committed to "giving voice" to those people who are not usually heard because those in power define such points of view as unimportant or difficult to access (Callaway, 1992; Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1992; LeCompte, 1993; Lincoln, 1993; Orner, 1992; Patai, 1991; S. Smith, 1993). For example, the voices of

children; women; the disabled; members of minority groups; lesbian, gay, and bisexual people; and lower participants in formal organization often have their voices silenced. However, in attempts to challenge the various forms of oppression that operate in our society, scholars problematize the very notion of "giving voice" to silenced others in terms of the mechanisms of power and privilege implied in such an action:

> Notions of power and privilege must be addressed in order to understand what it means to "have a voice." . . . The issue is not who has a voice; we all have voices and speak with them in very different ways. The problem arises when we define our strategy against oppression as one that enables us to "give" certain groups of people a voice. What does it mean to give? What kinds of relationships does this imply? What kind of power and privilege is implied in the act of giving? What does this say about how voices are heard and interpreted? (Dewar, 1991, p. 75)

Riessman (1993) is also unhappy with the notion of "giving" voice to the experiences of another and prefers to think of research as a "chorus of voices, with an embedded contrapuntal duet. . . . Some voices will have to be restrained to hear voices from below, to create a particular harmony, but a different interpreter might well allow other voices to dominate" (p. 16). Such thoughts on how voices are staged in the text draw upon recent literary and feminist critiques of ethnographic writing that focus attention upon the place of "selves" in the construction of texts about dominated others. These critiques call upon a language of criticism that speaks of voices, positions, silencing, and erasure and of the ways in which narratives, texts, selves, and others are reproduced through the politics of domination. All this brings to the fore key questions regarding who speaks in the text and whose story is being told, who maintains control over the narrative and, by implication, over the purposes to which the story is put. Cole (1991) points out the following with regard to critical feminist ethnographies that require symmetrical relationships between the researcher and the researched:

> It raises questions about the rhetorical conventions used to locate and frame subjects in the texts and how their stories can most usefully be represented. . . . Which dialogues are included and privileged, how dialogue is framed, and which dialogues are suppressed and excluded are necessary mechanisms of construction. . . . In efforts not to exploit subjects, voices can be situated as central and positioned in ways that make them meaningful and productive. . . . Dispersed authority challenges illusions of single textual authority by representing other authoritative voices. (pp. 44-45)

Just how this dispersed authority and writing of multiple voices is to be achieved in the text is extremely problematic. Some have called for the production of jointly authored texts between the researcher and the participants as a way of promoting multivocal or polyphonic texts (Clifford, 1983; Lyons, 1992; Van Maanen, 1988). While supportive of this move, Sidonie Smith (1993) has expressed some concerns over the effect of what she calls *rampant polyphony* in texts that attempt to capture the differential experiences of an event and to legitimate the stories from all cultural locations. If all stories were given the same

valence, credibility, and weight, the politics of the text would seem democratic and egalitarian. However, the incorporation of so many voices would threaten to vitiate the impact of any specific voice, and the story of the event would threaten to consume the individual story. In this situation, Smith argues, the potential benefits of polyphonic interpretation give way before a *commodified cacophony* in which the reader ends up only with a kind of tourist experience. In support of this view, Hastrup (1992) questions the utopia of plural authorship that grants the participants the status of authors:

> However much we replace the monologue with dialogue the discourse remains asymmetrical, like the languages involved. The purpose of ethnography is to speak *about* something for somebody; it implies contextualization and reframing. At the autobiographical level ethnographers and informants are equals; but at the level of anthropological discourse their relationship is hierarchical. It is *our* choice to encompass their stories in a narrative of a different order. *We* select the quotations and edit the statements. We must not blur this major responsibility of ours by rhetorics of "many voices" and "multiple authorship" in ethnographic writing. (p. 122)

Others have also argued that the researcher must take the unavoidable responsibility for the final text that involves interpretation, evaluation, and judgment and should not attempt to displace it onto the participants in the study (Geertz, 1988; Gorelick, 1991; Marcus, 1992; Stacey, 1991). Indeed, for Richardson (1990b), proposals to still the sociologist as writer's voice are in danger of rejecting the value of sociological insight and also imply that facts can somehow exist without interpretation. She suggests that there is no one right answer to the problem of speaking for others and researchers are left having to realize that writing, as an intentional behavior, is a site of moral responsibility and that "we can choose to write so that the voice of those we write about is respected, strong and true" (Richardson, 1990b, p. 38).

Since there is no way to avoid deploying one's power if one chooses to write in this world, Richardson (1990b) argues for a merging of progressive and postmodernist thinking about authors and authority. This merging would counterbalance two impulses. First, the progressive impulse is to "give" voice to those who have been silenced and to speak for others even though one might not belong to the constituencies in question. In contrast, the second impulse from postmodernism attempts to delete the author and to dismantle distinctions between fact and fiction in ways that can disempower those given a voice through progressive writing by deconstructing their stories and undermining their grounds for authority. Such impulses need to be integrated, according to Richardson (1990b), by a progressive-postmodernist rewriting that recognizes that although all knowledge is partial, embodied, and historically and culturally situated, this does not mean that there is no knowledge or that situated knowledge is bad:

> There is no view from "everywhere," except for God. There is only a view from "somewhere," an embodied, historically and culturally situated speaker. . . . From this perspective, the sociologist speaks as narrator, a person with a point of view; an embodied person responsible for his or

her own words. . . . Rather than decrying our sociohistorical limitations, then, we can use them specifically to ask relevant (useful, empowering, enlightening) questions. Consequently, the most pressing issue, as I see it, is a practical-ethical one: how should we use our skills and privileges? . . . As qualitative researchers, we can more easily write as situated, positioned authors, giving up, if we choose, our *authority* over the people we study, but not the responsibility of *authorship* over our texts. (pp.27-28)

Richardson's (1990b) position provides a useful starting point for scholars in PE and sport who wish to explore different ways to represent themselves and others in their texts. Some possible tales that might be told are considered in the following sections. Where possible, I have drawn upon tales that have been told about PE and sport; however, where specific kinds of tales have been lacking in this domain, I have used examples from other disciplines for the purposes of illustration.

Moving Things on and Telling Different Tales

Geertz (1988) argued that "the pervasive questioning of standard modes of text construction—and standard modes of reading—not only leaves realism less easy: it leaves it less persuasive" (p. 137). While I disagree with Geertz that realist tales are any less persuasive in certain contexts, it is clear that they, like any other tale, are no longer innocent. If this is the case, then perhaps qualitative researchers in physical education and sport might consider engaging in "experimental writing" in the future. Initially, this might simply mean modifying realist tales in a mechanistic manner to include the author's position. For example, both Hanson (1992) and Newman (1992) include in the methodology part of their papers a section entitled "Instrumentation: Person as Instrument Statement." Here, the authors give their current employment status, appropriate qualifications, theoretical interests, and biases with regard to the topic of their analysis. While this information on the author is useful, it is essentially descriptive and acts as an additional means to persuade the reader of the author's *credibility*. As Newman (1992) comments, "To establish the researcher's credibility as an effective instrument of inquiry, it is necessary to provide information regarding his background, qualifications and training" (p. 77). It is interesting to note how Hanson talks in the first person, as "I," in this section while Newman prefers to talk about himself in the third person as "the researcher" and "he."

In their papers, each author provides details of the social class origins of their participants. Hanson (1992) also identifies the ethnicity of his subject by providing, for example, details of the death threats Henry Aaron (a major league baseball hitter) received, "from people not wanting a black man to break the legendary record [of Babe Ruth's career home run records]" (p. 51). However, in both papers readers are left to ponder the ethnicity of the authors and their social class origins along with the possible impact, if any, of these upon the interactions that took place as part of both the interviewing process and the production of the final written account. Finally, Hanson announces his presence in the text at various points as a named voice in (I take it selective) verbatim

transcriptions from an interview between himself and Hank Aaron. In contrast, Newman (1992) is absent from his presentation of salient themes that emerged in his interviews with two international goalkeepers. In essence, while both authors provide some details of their positioning and acknowledge their authorial presence within specific sections of the text, they essentially rely on realist forms of representation to tell their stories.

For my own part, I have also constructed a modified realist tale, in order to highlight the experiences of oppression that a lesbian PE teacher, Jessica (a pseudonym), experienced in her daily working life in a secondary school in England. Given the power differentials that operated both in terms of our emerging relationship and the production of the final written text, I felt it necessary to name the social categories I belonged to in relation to Jessica. This was necessary to signal, despite our commitment to a collaborative relationship, not only the privileges that came with my membership of such categories as male and heterosexual but also how these permeated the interpretation and the construction of the final text in relation to Jessica as female and lesbian (see Sparkes, 1994b).

As I constructed this account, I was acutely aware of the issues relating to voices in the text. After much thought, and discussions with Jessica, I opted for a strategy that included theory at the beginning and end of the paper, with the middle section focusing upon selected moments from the life history of Jessica. This middle section relied heavily upon Jessica's own words to illuminate her experiences of homophobia and heterosexism in different contexts and the manner in which these served to effectively silence her, and render her invisible, in specific social situations. Therefore, I only announced my authorial presence at various points in the text, and "disappear" to become an "absent presence" once Jessica's voice is introduced.

Of course, my disappearance is itself a textual illusion since I am ever present throughout the paper as its author whose guiding hand selects the quotations and shapes the story presented. Having acknowledged this, my disappearance needs to be seen as a textual strategy, a conscious decision to focus attention upon Jessica's words with a view to drawing the reader into the story line of oppression and evoking a response. Essentially, I wanted readers to feel Jessica's oppression and begin to locate themselves in the dynamics of this process. I wanted to evoke a response to Jessica's situation by providing what bell hooks (1991) called a *narrative of struggle*, a narrative in which the subjectivity of the oppressed individual reasserts itself. Whether this tactic works, only the readers can tell. However, it does signal that realist tales can be used to serve a critical agenda. By describing how the life worlds of people who appear as strangers are shaped by particular webs of contingencies within a sociopolitical milieu, the reader can achieve solidarity with them as fellow human beings (see Barone, 1992).

Realist tales can also be modified to include different narrative styles and conventions. This may be easier to accomplish in books and monographs than in papers in journals, since books and monographs allow more space in which to experiment and perhaps greater freedom of expression away from the sometimes harsh eyes and pens of referees. Here, a good example is provided by Klein (1993) in his book *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction*, which is based on a 7-year ethnographic study of four elite gyms on the west coast of the United States. These four gyms are amalgamated (in an

analytical sense) to create one fictitious gym called Olympic Gym that is the focus of the book. Having noted this fictive element, *Little Big Men* is essentially a realist tale in that the majority of the chapters draw upon the conventions of this genre as described earlier. For example, the author is absent from most of the text.

However, as Klein acknowledges in an appendix, the earlier chapters of the book reflect his attempt to experiment with different forms of representation in order to situate the reader in the world of the gym and competitive bodybuilding. To this end, he felt it important to simultaneously distance and draw in the reader because distancing can help to suspend a priori knowledge of the subject, while bringing the reader closer can facilitate translation. Therefore, to negate or defamiliarize the implied reader's previously held notions about bodybuilding, Klein draws upon a technique that exaggerates certain aspects of this subculture by representing it in a comic vein that highlights the ludicrous and carnival aspects of gym life.

To combat the fact that some dimensions of the gym scene were so similar to commonplace urban North America and in need of distancing to view them better, Klein (1993) made use of powerful metaphors from the general culture along with the technique of diorama or microcosm to create the distance required. For example, in the following passage the gym is portrayed in terms of a city:

> Viewed from the balcony of the 10,000-square-foot gym, one can see that it is laid out gridlike, as if composed by Salt Lake City's Mormon founders. Main street: a neat avenue about six feet wide and 250 feet long bisects the gym. Weight stations, miniskyscraper affairs of iron in a variety of shapes and functions, cut the space into cubes and line the main boulevard the entire length of the gym. "Avenue of the Olympians," I call it. Jutting off at regular intervals are straight little streets variously leading to pulleys, back machines, free weight racks, and the like—all dead-ending into mirrored walls that create an infinite sense of space. There's Leg Press Lane, Bicep Boulevard, and Ab Avenue. There is even a ghetto of "Blue Monsters" (Nautilus machines). The front desk, located at one end of the main avenue, magically becomes the old town hall where all official business gets transacted. . . . At times the streets of Olympic Gym are virtually deserted, and only a few inhabitants are about. However, around noon and six in the evening—rush hours—the gym is crowded with bodies double- and triple-parked: big, eight cylinder jobs with gleaming chrome deltoids and baroque hood ornaments that double as chests. (Klein, 1993, p. 22)

In looking at the gym as a city, Klein (1993) attempts to magnify it, and so distance it, in the same kind of way that a camera does when it pulls back on a tightly focused shot to reveal a larger subject. Likewise, in discussing his description of a typical night at the gym, Klein (1993) notes how he employs a slightly carnivalesque characterization of life at Olympic Gym that is both literary and an accurate depiction: "This has the effect of creating a tension between known and unknown elements of gym life; the commonplace knowledge is juxtaposed against the slightly ludicrous in the hope of situating the reader and providing a heretofore unencountered ambience" (p. 289).

In addition, the opening chapters also attempt to defamiliarize through a reflexive style that decenters the reader by drawing attention away from the ethnographer as authority. For example, Klein (1993) periodically invokes an autobiographical voice with the intention of drawing himself as ethnographer and the reader "outside the objective perimeter of the study by encouraging self-reflection by both parties. In this way interpretation becomes a three-way interaction between ethnographer, reader, and the subject(s) of the study" (p. 289).

Clearly, there are a set of key conventions that act to frame realist tales. However, this frame is not rigid or impermeable, there is room to maneuver. As a consequence, those who feel increasingly uncomfortable about producing author-evacuated tales might consider writing more of themselves into the text when and where they feel this to be appropriate. Likewise, these authors might also consider acknowledging and sharing with readers, in a reflexive manner, the rhetorical devices they have called upon as part of their attempts to produce a persuasive realist tale. Such inclusions would certainly not detract from the essence of realist tales and could act to enhance their ability to provide insights into the world of PE and sport.

Confessional Tales

The place of the author within realist and realist-critical tales can be variable, depending upon the purposes of the creators of the text. In contrast, the *confessional* tale, as described by Atkinson (1991) and Van Maanen (1988) is an autobiographical, highly personalized, and self-absorbed account that tells what "really" happened during the fieldwork. It attempts to gain a personalized authority by giving the researcher's point of view. Such tales are often produced separately from realist tales (usually by those who have already published realist accounts that are acceptable to a particular research community) in monographs, as journal articles, or as book chapters devoted to fieldwork practices and problems.

In many ways the confessional tale is different from realist tales. However, as Van Maanen (1988) indicates, confessional accounts do not usually replace realist accounts but act as a supplement to them. Confessional accounts usually elaborate extensively upon the formal methods described in the realist tale. Furthermore, fieldwork confessions almost always end up supporting whatever realist writing the author may have done in the past. That is, regardless of the limitations highlighted in the confessional tale, it is unlikely that the author will conclude that he or she was misled dramatically, got it wrong, or that he or she presented falsehoods to the audience.

Of course, confessional tales need not always be produced after the realist tale. For example, I have constructed a semiconfessional tale that provides insights into the ethical and political dilemmas embedded in my emerging relationship with Jessica in the context of our collaborative life history study (see Sparkes, 1994a). This text emerged simultaneously from an extended paper I wrote as an initial attempt to pull together some of the analytical insights generated in over 20 hours of interviews. Once the draft of this paper was completed, it became clear that two issues were intertwined—one related to methodological issues and the other to the telling of an oppression story. It was also clear that, given the

various word limitations imposed by academic journals, any one paper attempting to cover both issues in-depth would do justice to neither.

Following discussions with Jessica, I decided that two papers needed to be produced. The realist tale of Jessica's life focused upon issues of oppression (Sparkes, 1994b). The separate confessional tale exposed more of myself to the reader at a personal level both as a researcher and an author, as well as giving some interesting insights into the process of life history work. This was done by highlighting certain methodological and ethical issues that permeated the emerging relationship between Jessica and myself in terms of sharing stories, friendship, "therapy," and trading points, as well as my writing about Jessica's life as an "author." Given that these issues were so important to Jessica and myself, we agreed that I would work on writing the confessional first before devoting attention to the realist tale.

As things happened, due to the reviewing-revision process and publication schedules of different journals, the confessional was published first, but only a few months before the realist tale. Therefore, purely by chance, these two tales went public almost simultaneously, which provided readers with a range of possibilities for creating relationships between the two.[8] Having said this, the confessional tale supports the realist tale. For example, by providing details of early confusions and anxieties in the relationship between Jessica and myself, along with the manner in which over time we became friends, shared stories, and developed a trusting relationship, the confessional confirms the legitimacy of the life history as the chosen research methodology and adds to the authenticity of the data presented in the realist tale.

In contrast, Klein (1993), in his book *Little Big Men*, was able to incorporate a confessional element within his realist tale. In the opening chapter is a section entitled "Confessions of an Anthropologist." Here Klein reveals some moments of embarrassment and confusion he encountered as he tried to make sense of life in the gym. For example, even though he had prepared himself to "observe" the subculture of bodybuilders, Klein admits to being caught off guard and reacting only to the intimidating quality of the size of these people when he entered the gym initially. He coped by giving his attention to the pictures of bodybuilders (mostly male) posing on the wall:

> I was trained in techniques of observation. . . . I was convinced that there was not a bizarre or grotesque type of behavior I hadn't seen, read about, or had told to me. Crossing the threshold of the gym door, however, I unexpectedly froze when it came to engaging the "erotic" scene before me. I turned instead and frantically examined the anonymous wall behind the front desk. The embarrassment I felt over watching the goings-on was bad enough; my response was something else—very unprofessional. In retrospect, I felt like one of those subway-riding New Yorkers who, when faced with an ugly incident on the homeward journey, sits with eyes riveted on some inanimate object, denying it all in the hope that the obscene drunk or attacker will desist. In the years ahead, I would smile as I saw this same response in others. . . . "Can I help you?" The voice of someone behind the desk filtered through my concealed terror. I turned, frantically trying to think of something to say, some reason for being there, for standing like an idiot looking at these pictures. How embarrassing, had I been gawking for an eternity? (Klein, 1993, pp. 24-25)

Besides moments of embarrassment and confusion, Klein (1993) also gives details of how, at times, the bodybuilders knowingly misled him in terms of the information they provided. One incident, in particular, forced Klein to acknowledge his naiveté. It involved a recognized bodybuilder who informed Klein that, although he had at one time taken steroids, he no longer used them because he had mastered the intricacies of diet and training. Two days later Klein heard the same bodybuilder joking with his colleagues about an advice column he wrote in a leading bodybuilder magazine, and the views he had expressed in response to a young bodybuilder's inquiry about steroid use. The comments made, the laughter, and the jokes about what he had said in the advice column clearly indicated that this bodybuilder was still taking steroids. Such moments served as indicators of a ritual of passage into the bodybuilding culture, which led Klein (1993) to conclude the following:

> Being gullible was, oddly, an integral part of the field experience. Initial data posed a threat if one took it at face value, and the measure of cultural understanding came in direct proportion to the ability to discern and play with (interpret) behavioral contradictions. (p. 29)

Indeed, the confessions section of the book ends with the sentence, "At last I was coming of age at Olympic."

As with my own confessional tale (Sparkes, 1994a), the one told by Klein (1993) supports the realist tale told in the rest of his book. In keeping with the general conventions of confessionals, both are concerned primarily with how the fieldwork odyssey was accomplished by the researcher, particularly in terms of movement from "dumb outsider" to "knowledgeable insider" in a given culture. The shocks, surprises, blunders, and social gaffes of the researcher, along with the secrets unearthed in unlikely ways and places, reveal the human qualities of the researcher. Together, these form part of what Van Maanen (1988) called a *character-building conversion tale*, in which the researcher, who saw things in one way at the start of the study, comes to see them very differently by the end of the study.

In view of these features, perhaps as Atkinson (1991) suggests, the confessional tale is not really an alternative genre because it exists as a complement of rather than as a contrast to realist tales. Having said this, confessional tales have an important part to play in lifting the veil of secrecy that surrounds fieldwork by allowing the subjective fieldwork experiences of the researcher into the account. Indeed, as Van Maanen (1988) argues, it is precisely because realist tales are so often methodologically silent and "because they adopt the conceit that data must be cleanly separated from the fieldworker . . . and because they offer only the fieldworker's tightly packaged account of the culture studied, confessions are necessary" (p. 92).

Impressionist Tales

Impressionist tales are different, but few are available in the world of PE and sport. They are permeated with a self-conscious deployment of the more "literary" resources. For Foley (1992) this means that "impressionist tales or

documentary narratives have some obvious advantages over scientific ethnographies. . . . Such texts are usually much more dramatic and accessible'' (p. 42). The detachment of the realist genres is not sustained, and the author constructs a more explicitly vivid and metaphorical account. Van Maanen (1988) believes that there is an associative link between writing impressionist tales and the work of impressionist painters, like Renoir and Monet, who attempted ''to evoke an open, participatory sense in the viewer and as with all revisionist forms of art, to startle complacent viewers accustomed to and comfortable with older forms'' (p. 101). Likewise, impressionist ethnographies attempt to startle the audience by the use of striking stories. However, rather than luminous paintings, their medium is that of words, metaphors, phrasing, and imagery coupled with an expansive recall of fieldwork experience.

As with other forms of tale, a range of conventions are drawn upon (Van Maanen, 1988). These include *textual identity*, which uses dramatic recall to draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow the audience, as far as is possible, to see, hear, and feel as the researcher, saw, heard, and felt. *Fragmented knowledge* is used so that the tale often reads like a novel. This can be off-putting, and certain sensibilities are jarred for those used to realist tales. This is because the recalled events have uncertain meanings for an audience who are unsure where they are being taken and why, as cultural knowledge is slipped to them in fragmented and disjointed ways. *Dramatic control* is also used to move the author back in time to events that might later have given rise to understandings or confusions. In the story world, the fieldworker's readings of these events as they occurred are important. Hence, the recall is sometimes presented in the present tense in an attempt to give the tale a ''you-are-there'' feel.

A recent example of an impressionist tale is provided by Viejola (1994) in a paper entitled ''Metaphors of Mixed Team Play,'' which utilizes fragmented knowledge to draw the reader into a conversation with the author about the gendered nature of sport. The text skillfully disorients the reader by its arrangements of paragraphs that slip in and out of focus the views of the ''I'' (the author?), the ''you'' (a friend or reader in conversation with the author?), and the ''we'' (again, the author and somebody else, the author and the reader, or ''we'' as gendered players?). Later in the paper Viejola acknowledges the game she has invited the reader to play within her text:

> Both ''you'' and ''me'' in this text have been metaphors, rhetorical positions, or rather: postures and relations, for the reader(s) and the writer to choose, occupy and change. . . . (Did you, by any chance, think that the ''I'' here was a woman, and the ''you'' a man, or vice versa? Did you identify with ''me'' or ''you''? Through all the text, or just momentarily, in some situations? Did you alternate—perhaps even blend?) . . . Whereas, talking about ''women'' and ''men,'' ''them,'' would make things too easy for both of us, the reader(s) and the writer. We would forget that in the text the issue is always about me—the writer, the player(s)—and you—the reader(s), the co-player(s) and the adversary(ies)—and the ''native'': the other. (Viejola, 1994, p. 42)

In relation to this kind of writing, Van Maanen (1988) emphasizes that the standards are not disciplinary but literary ones in which artistic nerve is required of the teller, and literary standards are of more interest than scientific ones:

> The audience cannot be concerned with the story's correctness, since they were not there and cannot know if it is correct. The standards are largely those of interest (does it attract?), coherence (does it hang together?), and fidelity (does it seem true?). . . . The main obligation of the impressionist is to keep the audience alert and interested. . . . Stories, by their ability to condense, exemplify, and evoke a world, are as valid a device for transmitting cultural understanding as any other researcher-produced concoction. (p. 119)

In summary, impressionist tales as a form of representation attempt to provoke multiple and often contrasting interpretations that illustrate how coming to understand a culture is a continuous process of interpretation that involves learning to appreciate the world in different ways. As tales, they are a recognition and a celebration of the more literary and metaphorical aspects of qualitative research writing. Consequently, they call upon literary skills to produce evocative tales and the difficulties of this task should not be underestimated.

Narratives of the Self

Elements of impressionist tales can be found in *narratives of the self*. These narratives are a form of evocative writing that produces highly personalized and revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences. Dramatic recall, strong metaphors, vivid characters, unusual phrasings, and the holding back on interpretation are used to invite the reader to emotionally ''relive'' the events with the author:

> Narratives of the self do not read like traditional ethnography because they use the writing techniques of fiction. They are specific stories of particular events. Accuracy is not the issue; rather narratives of the self seek to meet literary criteria of coherence, verisimilitude, and interest. Because narratives of the self are staged as imaginative renderings, they allow the fieldworker to exaggerate, swagger, entertain, make a point without tedious documentation, relive the experiences, and say what might be unsayable in other circumstances. Writing these frankly subjective narratives, ethnographers are somewhat relieved of the problems of speaking for the ''Other'', because they are the ''Other'' in their texts. (Richardson, 1994, p. 521)

A good example of this genre is provided by Fussell (1991) in his book *Muscle: Confessions of an Unlikely Bodybuilder*. The book explores the reasons why the author, an Oxford graduate in literature, aged 26, 6 feet 4 inches tall and weighing 170 pounds, entered into the world of hard-core bodybuilding and vividly describes some of his experiences within this subculture over a 4-year period as he put on 80 pounds of muscle. As he makes clear at the start of his book, ''The following is an account of my journey—what I did, what I saw,

what I felt. . . . I sing of dreamers and addicts, rogues and visionaries. And I sing of my own solitary pilgrimage into this strange world'' (Fussell, 1991, p. 14).

Confessions is written in the form of a novel and make no pretense to being ''academic.'' There is no discussion of methodology, there are no edited chunks of interview data, and there are no references or theoretical perspective that frames the main story line or the interpretation made by the reader. Instead, the author relies upon his dramatic and impressionistic recall of events and uses various literary conventions to create rich, colorful, and believable characters, such as Bamm Bamm, Vinnie, and Sweetpea. These characters are drawn together in a story line or plot that revolves around Fussell's personal quest to protect and strengthen his sense of self by building a muscular body. This transformed body was to act as an armor to keep his fears of the outside world at bay and his anxieties about himself as a person locked inside.

As the reader is drawn into this tale, dramatic insights are provided into the social meaning of muscle within the bodybuilding subculture and the part muscle plays in the construction of a specific form of masculinity. Insights are also provided into the motivations that drive some men to give up their jobs, abandon their friends, train with weights for 4 hours a day for 6 days a week, eat the equivalent of five six-course meals a day, and inject themselves with massive doses of steroids. All this, as part of a quest for a hypermuscular ideal that can leave them physically and emotionally devastated. In the concluding chapter called the ''Aftermath,'' Fussell (1991) reflects back upon his journey of the self:

> But this shell that I created wasn't meant just to keep people at bay. After all, a can of Mace could do that. No, this carapace was laboriously constructed to keep things inside too. The physical palisades and escarpments of my own body served as a rocky boundary that permitted no passage, no hint of a deeper self—a self I couldn't bear. . . . I became a bodybuilder as a means of becoming a caricature. The inflated cartoon I became relieved me from the responsibility of being human. But once I'd become that caricature, that inflated cartoon, I longed for something else. As painful and humiliating as it is to be human, being subhuman or superhuman is far worse. (pp. 248-249)

Narratives of the self are also beginning to appear in other areas related to PE and sport. For example, a group of Scandinavian scholars have used what Sironen (1994) calls *memory work* to systematically explore their personal experiences of sport and their body history. This approach recalls events from the author as researcher's life, and these events then form the core of a written narrative that facilitates interpretation from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Accordingly, Tiihonen (1994) explores the social construction of male identity in Finland during the 1960s and 1970s by drawing upon memories of his own sporting involvement and body experiences as they were shaped in relation to asthma. The paper opens with a section called ''The Cough'' that focuses upon an incident when Tiihonen was training at a camp for the national U16-football team in 1975:

> My legs give way. Vision clouds. I head straight for the toilet. I hope no one noticed, especially the coach. Over the toilet bowl and hacking. Not just a hack but a rasping cough which throws up green sputum down the front of my sports shirt. Tearing lungs, but the cough won't stop. I lean against the toilet for support. I'm faint. . . . When the coughing finally eases off, my shirt front is covered in green slime and my chest hurts. I'm amazed. This cough has bothered me for weeks, but I didn't think it was so bad. I'm scared, though I don't dare show it. I don't tell the coach. (Tiihonen, 1994, p. 50)

Tiihonen (1994) then goes on to incorporate other memories as he constructs a narrative of illness based upon his intensely colored experiences of asthma. In writing through these experiences, he is able to draw the reader into his story world while simultaneously thematizing the body as anxious, instrumental, male, ambivalent, disciplined, and released via its inscription within hegemonic masculinity.

In a similar fashion, Silvennoinen (1993, 1994) draws upon memories evoked by photographs of himself as a child to trace a personal history of his own body awareness and also uses memories of his childhood heroes to explore the social construction of masculinity. In contrast, Kosonen (1993) explores issues of femininity and sexuality by focusing upon memories of her running body as a young woman growing up in Finland. Likewise, Kaskisaari (1994) draws upon her personal experiences of growing up as an athletic girl and her ''rhythmbody'' to focus on lesbianism as a female experience that allows some athletes to resolve the conflict between the traditional female role and their own sexual identity.

In reading these accounts I am taken into the intimate world of the other in a way that stimulates reflection upon my own life in relation to theirs. As a reader, I assume that they have not deliberately fabricated details and have limited themselves to events they remember. However, as storytellers they are primarily concerned with evocation rather than ''true'' representation. In their texts, ''learning about'' integrates emotional and cognitive dimensions and emphasizes ''participating with'' rather than ''describing for'' the other. As such, rather than the usual privileging of cognitive knowing and the ''spectator theory of knowledge'' in which knowing is equated exclusively with observing from a distance, these authors incorporate feelings and participatory experience as dimensions of knowing. Finally, by acknowledging a potential for optional readings, these authors give readers license to take part in an experience that can reveal to them not only how it was for the authors, but how it could be, or once was, for them as the reader.

Poetic Representations

Literary skills are also necessary for exploring other genres. This is particularly so with poetic representations such as those of Richardson (1992b) who has taken 36 pages of interview transcription and shaped it into a 3 page poem/transcript called ''Louisa May's Story of Her Life.'' The poem begins as follows:

The most important thing
to say is that
I grew up in the South.
Being Southern shapes
aspirations shapes
what you think you are
and what you think you're going to be.

(*When I hear myself, my Ladybird*
kind of accent on tape. I think, OH Lord,
You're from Tennessee.)

No one ever suggested to me
that anything
might happen *with* my life. (Richardson, 1992b, p. 20)

In writing the poem Richardson (1992b) drew upon both scientific and literary criteria. The words used were those spoken by Louisa May:

> The poem, therefore, had to build upon other poetic devices such as repetition, pauses, meter, rhymes and off rhymes. Without putting words into her mouth, which would violate my sociological sensibilities, I used her voice, diction and tone. I wrote her whole life—as she told it to me. (Richardson, 1992b, p. 24)

The writing of a sociological interview as a poem makes the reader constantly aware of the facticity of its constructiveness:

> By violating the conventions of how sociological interviews are written up, those conventions are uncovered as choices authors make; not rules for writing truths. The poetic form, moreover, because it plays with connotative structures and literary devices to convey meaning, commends itself to open and multiple readings in ways that straight sociological prose does not. The poetic form of representation, therefore, has a greater likelihood of engaging readers in reflexive analyses of their own interpretive labors of my interpretive labors of Louisa May's interpretive labors. Knowledge is thus metaphored and experienced as prismatic, partial, and positional, rather than singular, total, and univocal. (Richardson, 1992b, p. 25)

Producing poetic representations can also have a range of benefits for the researcher as author. These include, Richardson (1992a) argues, enhancing the ability of the researcher to step into the shoes of the other, becoming more attuned to lived experiences as subjectively felt by the other, and being able to see familiar sites in new ways. These benefits, when coupled with those potentially available to the reader of poetic representations, such as touching us where we live (in our bodies), might stimulate some experimentation with this genre within PE and sport.

Of course, this is not to suggest that poets have yet to turn their attention to sport and the body. Indeed, they have, and a special issue of *Quest* in 1989 (Vol. 41, No. 2) was dedicated to poetry and art in sport and movement. The contents of this special issue illustrate how poets and artists are able to synthesize, assemble, and compose images that make connections to the subjective world of feelings and emotions. However, the poetic representations as constructed by Richardson (1992b) have yet to appear in PE and sport. When they do, they will directly challenge traditional views of validity, reliability, and truth, as well as challenging the norms of research production and dissemination.

Ethnographic Drama

> *Drama is a way of shaping an experience without losing the experience; it can blend realist, fictional, and poetic techniques; it can reconstruct the "sense" of an event from multiple "as-lived" perspectives; and it can give voice to what is unspoken. . . . When the material to be displayed is intractable, unruly, multisited, and emotionally laden, drama is more likely to recapture the experience than is standard writing.* (Richardson, 1994, p. 522)

An excellent example of ethnographic drama is provided by Ellis and Bochner (1992), who present a personal account of their lived experience of abortion narrated in both the female and male voices. Not surprisingly, during the time that these events took place Ellis and Bochner were too engaged in what was happening to record their experiences. However, 2 months after the abortion they independently reconstructed a chronology of the events that took place, including the emotional dimensions of their decision making, turning points, coping strategies, the symbolic environment of the clinic, and the abortion procedure as it was experienced by them. These separate accounts were then transformed into a dialogic mode of narration that attempted to capture the sense of process and the emotional details of what happened. They also got other people with whom they had consulted to write about their experiences during the decision-making process so that multiple voices were provided for telling the story.

The drama they present is offered as a form of narrating personal experience that makes themselves experimental subjects and treats their own experiences as primary data. The goal of the drama is to lead the readers through a journey in which they develop an experiential sense of the events and come away with a sense of "what it must have felt like" to live through what happened:

> Recognising that the literature rarely reflects the meanings and feelings embodied by the human side of abortion, we wanted to tell our story in a way that would avoid the risks of dissolving the lived experience in a solution of impersonal concepts and abstract theoretical schemes. We have tried to be faithful to our experience, but we understand that the order and wholeness we have brought to it through the narrative form is different than the disjointed and fragmented sense we had of it while it took place. Perhaps this is the way in which narrative constitutes an active and reflexive form of inquiry. Narratives express the values of narrators, who also construct, formulate and remake these values. A personal narrative, then, car

be viewed as an "experience of the experience" intended to inquire about its possible meanings and values in a way that rides the active currents of lived experience without fixing them once and for all. (Ellis & Bochner, 1992, p. 98)

Reflecting on the feelings that their work might evoke in the reader, Ellis and Bochner (1992) recognize that, while identification and empathy are likely, these reactions are not the only nor necessarily the most desirable ones. Ellis and Bochner hope that, by putting readers in the position of experiencing an experience, they can reveal not only how it was for the authors but how it could be, or even once was, for the readers. As a consequence, readers are made aware of similarities and differences between their world and that of the authors, and it becomes possible for the readers to see the other in themselves or themselves in the other. Accordingly, Ellis and Bochner conclude that their experiment in formulating narrative as a mode of inquiry should not be judged so much against the standards and practices of science as against the practical, emotional, and aesthetic demands of life.

Ethnographic Fictions

Equally demanding of literary skills and sensitivities are *ethnographic fictions*. According to Tierney (1993) these rearrange facts, events, and identities "in order to draw the reader into the story in a way that enables deeper understandings of individuals, organizations, or the events themselves" (p. 313). Creating just such a fiction in which he states clearly that "all the names, characters, and incidents are fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or events is entirely coincidental" (p. 314), Tierney highlights and explores the background, personalities, conflicts, and personal struggles associated with one university's addition of a sexual orientation clause to its statement of nondiscrimination. The end result is a powerful story that has the potential to provoke multiple interpretations and responses from readers who differ in their positioning to the story provided. If the story "works" and serves its purpose, then it does so from a *literary* perspective:

> Such perspectives reframe our analysis away from scientific standards of validity or trustworthiness, and toward more literary definitions of good literature. The reader does not judge the text according to standardized scientific criteria, or with the assumption that the text is meant to explain all such situations. Rather, the reader judges the text in a self-referential manner and might call upon the following questions in judgment: (a) Are the characters believable? (b) Are there lessons to be learned from the text for my own life? (c) Is the situation plausible? (d) Where does the author fit in the formation of the text? (e) What other interpretations exist? and (f) Has the text enabled me to reflect on my own life and work? (Tierney, 1993, p. 313)

Clearly, as researchers move from scientific tales and realist tales into other genres that emphasize the socially constructed nature of the text such as impressionist tales, poetry, ethnographic dramas, and ethnographic fictions, a range of dilemmas and possibilities emerge in relation to how researchers represent themselves and others when writing about PE and sport. Experimentation with other genres also brings to the fore the crisis of legitimation.

Telling Different Tales and the Legitimation Crisis

It would now seem that there are many possible ways to tell our tales about PE and sport and various ways to write oneself and others into and out of accounts. Quite simply, as Denzin (1994) argues, "There is more than one way to do representation. . . . There are several styles of qualitative writing, several different ways of describing, inscribing and interpreting reality. Each style creates the conditions for its own criticism" (pp. 503-506). Such diversity raises the issue of how judgment is to be made about different kinds of tales. This problem is highlighted by Foley's (1992) reflections on his own attempt to write a critical sports narrative:

> How is it possible to write truly accessible, popular representations of sports that are also reflexive and thus fulfill the criteria of good postpositivist critical interpretation? . . . One is left feeling that there is no way to serve two masters, the people and the professoriate. . . . I am still trying to find a middle road between extensive poetic experimentation advocated by some postmodern ethnographer's . . and the new, more accessible quasi-literary version of the old scientific realist tale. . . . Is it possible to write a thoroughly popular, dramatic, accessible narrative that social scientists will still consider scientific? (pp. 44-45)

The simple answer might be a resounding "No!" The sections on impressionist tales, poetic representations, ethnographic drama, and ethnographic fiction, make it clear that the orthodox "scientific" views of validity, reliability, and generalizability make little sense in relation to such tales. As Riessman (1993) points out, the prevailing concepts of verification and the procedures for establishing validity "rely on realist assumptions and consequently are largely irrelevant to narrative studies. A personal narrative is not meant to be read as an exact record of what happened nor is it a mirror of the world 'out there' " (p. 64).

Given that different epistemological and ontological assumptions inform qualitative and postpositivistic inquiry, it makes little sense to impose the criteria used to pass judgment on one upon the other. Attempts to do so are, at best, misguided and, at worst, arrogant and nonsensical, a form of intellectual imperialism that builds failure in from the start so that the legitimacy of other research forms is systematically denied. As a consequence, the research community is left in a no-win situation in which deafness by dissonance occurs as researchers offer blind allegiance to their own particular paradigmatic position and refuse to acknowledge the contribution that other ways of knowing can make to our understanding of PE and sport. In view of this, the differences between alternative forms of inquiry in terms of their process and products need to be acknowledged so that each can be judged using criteria that are consistent with their own internal meaning structures.

Given that historically there has been a tendency to misapply and impose positivistic and postpositivistic criteria upon qualitative research, some scholars have argued for abandoning altogether the notion of validity in qualitative inquiry. For example, Wolcott (1994)—in discussing his own impressionist tale that incorporates a narrative of self to provide dramatic and destabilizing insights into personal, legal, and medical (psychiatric) truths as they impacted upon his life—talks of the absurdity of validity:

> What I seek is something else, a quality that points more to identifying critical elements and wringing plausible interpretations from them, something one can pursue without becoming obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the Truth. . . . And I do not accept validity as a valid criterion for guiding or judging my work. I think we have labored far too long under the burden of this concept (are there others as well?) that might have been better left where it began, a not-quite-so-singular-or-precise criterion as I once believed it to be for matters related essentially to tests and measurement. I suggest we look elsewhere in our continuing search for and dialogue about criteria appropriate to qualitative researchers' approaches and purposes. (pp. 366-369)

A useful starting point for looking elsewhere might be the world of literature and literary criticism. This suggestion becomes more compelling when one considers the views of Bruner (1986) who proposes that there are two modes of cognitive functioning or two modes of thought—the *paradigmatic* or *logico-scientific* and the *narrative* modes—each of which provide distinctive ways of ordering experience and constructing reality. The paradigmatic mode attempts to fulfill the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation and deals in general causes and their establishment and makes use of procedures to assure verifiable reference and to test for empirical truth. In contrast, Bruner (1986) describes the narrative mode of knowing as follows:

> The imaginative application of the narrative mode of knowing leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily "true") historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place. . . . In contrast to our vast knowledge of how science and logical reasoning proceed, we know precious little in any formal sense about how to make good stories. (p. 13)

Although these two modes can be complementary they are irreducible to one another. Indeed, Bruner (1986) warns that to reduce one mode to the other, or to ignore one at the expense of the other, will inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought contained in each. Quite simply, each is a *different* way of knowing that has its own operating principles and its own criteria of well-formed-ness. As a consequence, they differ radically in their procedures of verification. How they convince and what they convince one of is also different: Well formed arguments convince one of their truth, whereas stories convince one of their lifelikeness. One mode verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for

establishing formal and empirical truth, whereas the other does not establish truth but verisimilitude. Therefore, as Eichberg (1994) notes, "Narrative discourses will be taxed for their literary value. They grow in quality by the development of their aesthetic expression" (p. 110).

A similar point is made by Eisner (1991), who argues that what is personal, literary, and even poetic can be a valid source of knowledge, even though this is consistently denied by those who hold a restricted "scientific" view of what constitutes knowledge and truth. Eisner acknowledges that works of poetry and literature are not true in the *literal* sense, but suggests that they can be true in the *metaphorical* sense. To restrict truth to literal truth alone is to restrict knowledge to those forms of discourse that can be literally true:

> Scientific knowledge is seldom true in the literal sense. . . . Especially in the social sciences where metaphor, analogical reasoning, and hypothetical constructs abound, literal truths are scarce. When we use literature, for example, to enlarge understanding, *literal* truth becomes an irrelevant criterion for appraising its utility. A piece of fiction can be true and still be fiction. Fiction, in the metaphorical sense is "true to life"; it helps us to perceive, experience, and understand what we have previously neglected. (Eisner, 1991, p. 108)

Clearly, the world of literature is a rich area for exploration by the tellers of different tales in qualitative inquiry. However, while some are very supportive of this move, they are concerned not to relocate themselves completely in the literary domain. For example, Josselson (1993), in editing a volume on the narrative study of lives, had to confront the following questions:

> What is a good story? Is just a good story enough? What must be added to story to make it scholarship? How do we derive concepts from stories and then use these concepts to understand people? What—precisely—would have to be added to transform story material from the journalistic or literary to the academic? (p. xi)

Josselson goes on to provide an outline of some of the criteria she and her coeditor used in evaluating the work they received. These included breadth, coherence, aesthetic appeal, the integration of theory and previous knowledge, and an explication of the relationship between the author and the subject.

Similar issues are raised by Riessman (1993) with regard to the problems of evaluating a narrative analysis:

> Some might say that the criteria of art are sufficient for appraising a "blurred genre": Does a narrative really move us? If narrative work is viewed as literary craft rather than a social scientific activity, art is sufficient. Although I welcome artistic representations (too much social science writing is formulaic and technically compulsive), there is a need for something more, in my view. . . . Traditional notions of reliability simply do not apply to narrative studies, and validity must be radically reconceptualized. (pp. 64-65)

For Riessman (1993), the critical issue in narrative studies relating to validation is the process through which claims are made for the "trustworthiness" of the interpretations, and she lists four validation criteria: persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic use. Having discussed the problems and possibilities associated with each of these, Riessman makes the important point that notions of validation in narrative studies cannot be reduced to a set of formal rules and regulations or standardized technical procedures.

This point is reinforced in the work of Lather (1993) as part of her own fertile obsession with the topic of validity after poststructuralism. For Lather, validity is seen as an incitement to discourse. Her goal is to reinscribe validity in such a way as to use the antifoundational problematic to loosen the master code of positivism and postpositivism that continues to shape contemporary research:

> Rather than jettisoning "validity" as the term of choice, I retain the term in order to both circulate and break with the signs that code it. What I mean by the term, then, is all of the baggage that it carries plus, in a doubled-movement, what it means to rupture validity as a regime of truth, to displace its historical inscription toward "doing the police in different voices." (Lather, 1993, p. 674)

In terms of redefining the concept of criteria, Lather raises a host of concerns that decenters validity as being about epistemological guarantees and reframes validity as multiple, partial, and endlessly deferred. Accordingly, her notion of a *validity of transgression* runs counter to the standard *validity of correspondence*. In developing her ideas on transgressive validity, Lather discusses the strands of, and provides check lists for, *ironic* validity, *paralogical* validity, *rhizomatic* validity, and *voluptuous* validity. While elements of these strands are to be found in the alternative tales I have signaled in this paper, the notion of voluptuous validity is particularly appealing. With regard to this form of validity, Lather notes the following features:

- Goes too far toward disruptive excess, leaky, runaway, risky practice.
- Embodies a situated, partial positioned, explicit tentativeness.
- Constructs authority via practices of engagement and self-reflexivity.
- Creates a questioning text that is bounded and unbounded, closed and opened.
- Brings ethics and epistemology together. (Lather, 1993, p. 686)

The poetic representations of Richardson (1992a, 1992b) are cited by Lather (1993) as examples of the kind of work that displays voluptuous validity and goes "too far" with the politics of uncertainty by blurring the lines between the genres of poetry and social science. In total, the forms of validity discussed by Lather move the discussion of validity away from epistemological criteria of truth as a correspondence between thought and its object to criteria grounded in the growing crisis of representation. As this crisis has mingled with the crisis of legitimation, there are now a host of *validities* besides those already mentioned, including *successor validity*, *catalytic validity*, *consensual validity*, *interrogated validity*, *imperial validity*, and *situated validity* (see Altheide & Johnson, 1994).

The ongoing radical reconceptualization of key concepts such as validity, as part of the fifth moment of qualitative inquiry, has major implications for the tellers of different tales. The emergence of a multitude of criteria for judging both the process and products of qualitative research clearly signals that there can be no canonical approach to this form of inquiry, no recipes or rigid formulas, since different validation procedures or sets of criteria may be better suited to some situations and forms of representation than others. Most importantly, these criteria can change over time. John Smith (1993) argued as follows with regard to the nature of judgment in interpretive inquiry:

> Judgments about the quality of research are not made with the application of abstract standards or rules; these judgments are practical accomplishments, undertaken within the context of dialogue and persuasion, that we work out as we go along. This is a process that has at its core issues of ethics and morals, not epistemological issues. Thus, interpretivists do not think of criteria as standards that make our judgments, as they are normally thought of, they see criteria as characterizing traits or values that influence our judgments. Moreover, these particular traits that are put forth as characteristic of good research are constantly subject to interpretation and reinterpretation as times and conditions change. (p. 139)

In this view, the terrain upon which judgments are made is continually shifting and is characterized by openness rather than stability and closure. It is in this situation of flux that the research community within PE and sport must grapple with the criteria issue and learn to judge a variety of tales in different but appropriate ways. This is particularly so for those who act as the "gatekeepers" of knowledge within the community, such as journal editors and referees, who have great control over what gets to appear in print in the public domain. Likewise, those who teach classes on qualitative research might consider making their students aware of alternative forms of representation and different writing styles with a view to encouraging experimentation. None of this is easy. However, the results of these deliberations in the coming years will have a major impact on whether poetic representations, ethnographic drama and fiction, or impressionist tales are accorded the same legitimacy as more "conventional" tales.

Taking an optimistic view, we as researchers need to recognize that standards do change. For example, many once believed that the passive voice was the only way to write a dissertation, but such a belief is now rejected in a multitude of areas. Not so long ago qualitative research in general was fighting for acceptance but is now found in a host of prestigious journals and is taught in classes at numerous institutions of higher education. Therefore, as Denzin (1994) points out, as things change, so will the stories we tell one another, along with the criteria we use for reading stories: "The good stories are always told by those who have learned well the stories of the past, but who are unable to tell them any longer because those stories no longer speak to them, or to us" (p. 513).

Closing Thoughts

The dual crises of representation and legitimation, the author's place in the text, and issues of voice provide a range of dilemmas and opportunities that qualitative researchers need to address in the coming years. For the moment, at least, it seems likely that scientific tales will continue to be the dominant form of representation for positivist and postpositivist researchers, and realist tales will be the main ones produced by qualitative researchers. This is not surprising as these tales have served researchers well in the past for particular purposes and will continue to contribute to understanding in the future. These tales are certainly not to be dismissed lightly, despite a growing awareness of their limitations in specific contexts. Indeed, researchers of any paradigmatic persuasion within PE and sport should pause for thought before rushing out to produce experimental texts in the spirit of what Hammersley (1993) calls *textual radicalism.*

During that pause, those who wish to embark upon the adventure of telling different tales need to reflect upon several issues. First, there are the problems associated with their actual construction. For example, while Agar (1990) acknowledges the fascination of breaking with realist tales he also expresses some practical concerns about how an impressionist tale is put together:

> In such tales one uses the scenic method to describe what actually happens. But then I start ticking off problems: How does one integrate and legitimate the expository writing to enable comprehension of the scene? How does one structure the scenes—simple chronology, thematically, topically, theoretically—and how does one mark the structure so that the reader knows what is going on? How does one organize multiple potential interpretations of a scene and support some and rule out others? How does one weave theoretical frames into discourse? These problems do not strike me as impossible, just as difficult and neglected. (Agar, 1990, p. 85)

These are problems associated with the creation of the final product. Further problems arise in terms of the relationship between this final product and the research process itself. On this issue, Agar (1990) expresses concern over the general lack of discussion regarding the research process and how it would need to change to be in harmony with the final product. He feels that there is a danger that qualitative researchers, in their newly awakened enthusiasm to focus on the text as a neglected product, might engage in what Clifford (1986) calls a "fetishizing of form" (p. 21) and thereby lose sight of the process side of what they do. When this happens there is a tendency to define process and product as separate problems when in fact they are intimately related to each other. Agar goes on to point out that one unintended consequence of this dislocation is that theories of text can develop in isolation from the research processes, the results of which they supposedly represent. Having highlighted these and other issues, Agar (1990) concludes as follows:

> Textuality, as a consciousness-raising concept, is long overdue. But textuality, as the primary focus for what ethnography is all about, is, I think, a mistake. When process and product tug against each other, ethnographic credibility turns sour—credibility in the sense of making a good argument that displays and accounts for samples of group life. At a time when interest in ethnographic research is growing, when our sense of what it is and how it works is improving, a move to new textual forms without more attention to the research processes that ground them would be a serious ethnomistake. (p. 87)

Others have also warned that a preoccupation with style and genre runs the risk of aestheticism in which the value of writing about research exhausts itself in the pleasure of the text (Geertz, 1988; Rosaldo, 1993). These are timely words of warning, and they guard against substituting one form of neglect (for the product) for another (the process). There is a need to be constantly aware of the intimate relationship between the two when researchers in PE and sport experiment with new forms of writing. Atkinson (1990) argues the following:

> There is no need for sociologists all to flock towards "alternative" literary modes. The point of the argument is not to suggest that suddenly, from now on, sociological ethnography should be represented through pastiche or literary forms. The discipline will not be aided by the unprincipled adoption of any particular textual practices, "literary" or otherwise. On the other hand, we must always be aware that there are many available styles. (p. 180)

In a similar fashion, Tierney (1993) argues that not all researchers need choose to construct ethnographic fictions since the author's *intentions* and *purposes* may necessitate the production of a more traditional case study and form of reporting. Tierney (1993) suggests, however, that there just might be times when researchers "need to create texts that enable the reader to reflect on his or her own life and see if the text resembles any sense of reality" (p. 313). In such circumstances, the author might consider producing an ethnographic fiction as opposed to a scientific or realist tale. Likewise, those who wish to communicate, for example, the deep emotional experiences associated with involvement in PE and sport might choose an impressionist tale, an ethnographic drama, or perhaps a poetic representation for this purpose. In relation to this, it is interesting to note that Eichberg (1994), in considering how the subjectivity of bodily perceptions in sport might be explored and shared, suggests that introspective narratives and forms of representation that cross the borderline into fiction may be best suited to this task.

Verma (1991) emphasizes that some experiences can only find their expression in some kinds of tales and not others. He argues that although there has been a blurring of genres in literature, certain distinctions still exist between a story, a poem, and a novel:

> Thus the choice of forms cannot be arbitrary; it is *inherent in the nature of experience itself.* We cannot transfer the same experience from one form to another without deadening its quick throb. Once dead, it can be transferred anywhere, to a play or a poem or a story. It is not that the writer first has a certain experience and then he embodies it in particular art form, *rather it is the experience which chooses its own form to make its presence felt.*

> Thus we cannot say that a particular experience has been "captured" in a story; there is no capturing in the realm of art. What is more correct is that a *certain experience could only realise itself in the form of a story, and in no other form.* (Verma, 1991, p.6; emphasis added).

If this view is accepted then it would seem, given the multidimensionality of the experiences available in PE and sports, that researchers might have little choice but to experiment with different forms of representation in the future. Of course, all this presupposes that authors are aware of the range of conventions available for reporting their work so that an active authorial decision can be made. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case, and too often the decision about what kind of tale to tell is a passive one, a default choice made because the author is not aware that there is anything else available besides scientific and realist tales.

This lack of awareness is likely to change in the coming years as we, as researchers, become increasingly conscious of our textual practices and how "tales from the field" are constructed. Already, the ways we write about ourselves and others has become problematic, and we cannot ignore this central aspect of our work. Our texts can no longer be taken as innocent or neutral. In view of this, Atkinson (1991) suggests we need to develop a *reflexive self-awareness* of the rhetorical and stylistic conventions we use, not with a view to substituting textual analysis for fieldwork, but rather with a view to bring them within our explicit and methodological understanding. He emphasizes that such reflexiveness is not easy since it would require an acquaintance with recent and contemporary literary theory along with parallel work on the poetics of economics, history, law, and so on. He also recognizes that it is far easier to copy a taken-for-granted model than to understand other genres, to manipulate their conventions, and to experiment with them.

However, if as a research community, we are to create the spaces for the new visions and voices that Bain (1990a) advocates, then textual experimentation and the telling of different tales is necessary. The net effect of this process will not be to eradicate more conventional forms of reporting. Rosaldo (1993) comments as follows with regard to anthropology:

> Rather than discarding distanced normalizing accounts, the discipline should recover them, but with a difference. They must be cut down to size and relocated, not replaced. No longer enshrined as ethnographic realism, the sole vehicle for speaking the literal truth about other cultures, the classic norms should become one mode of representation among others. . . . An increased disciplinary tolerance for diverse legitimate rhetorical forms will allow for any particular text to be read against other possible versions. Allowing forms of writing that have been marginalized or banned altogether to gain legitimacy could enable the discipline to approximate people's lives from a number of angles of vision. Such a tactic would better enable us to advance the ethnographic project of apprehending the range of human possibilities in their fullest complexities. (p. 62)

Of course, writing different tales is no easy matter, and it would be foolish to suggest otherwise. As Tierney (1993) points out, "Undoubtedly some experiments in narrative will fail, but others will succeed and, in doing so, they will enable us to see the world in dramatically different ways" (p. 314). In view of this, perhaps the risks are worth taking, even though we don't know where this experimentation will eventually take us. One thing is for sure, there can be no going back for any researcher, whatever his or her paradigmatic persuasion, to the cozy self-deluding days when texts were seen as neutral and innocent representations of the realities of others. The days of innocence are gone. All of us, as positioned authors, are clearly implicated in the construction of our texts, and this needs to be acknowledged as we begin to reflect more deeply about how and why conventional tales are told in PE and sport, as a prelude to seriously considering how alternative tales might be constructed in the future.

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Notes

[1]For more detailed considerations of postmodernism/poststructuralism and their ''characteristics'' see Best and Kellner (1991), Cherryholmes (1988), Featherstone (1991), Gergen (1990), Harvey, (1989), Lather (1991), Murphy (1988), Rosenau (1992), Sarup (1989), and Smart (1993). For powerful critiques of postmodernism/poststructuralism see Dewar (1993), Evans (1990), Giddens (1987), Pool (1991), Sangren (1988), Skeggs (1991), Tinning (1992c), and Ulin (1991).

[2]In recent years, the product of research—the written account—has begun to receive greater attention. Several books have focused directly upon this issue (Atkinson, 1990, 1992; Becker, 1986; Wolcott, 1990), and journal papers on the topic have also appeared (Atkinson, 1991; McWilliam, 1993; Meloy, 1993). General books on research have also included chapters on writing (see Delamont, 1992; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Sparkes, 1992b).

[3]Issues of representation have been focused upon by Cole (1991), Evans (1992), Foley (1992), Lyons (1992), and Sparkes (1991, 1992d). Issues of legitimation have been focused upon by Bain (1991), Harris (1981), Locke (1989), Martens (1987), Schempp and Choi (1994), Striegel (1992), and Sparkes (1989, 1992a, 1992c). The influence of postmodernism and poststructuralism is found in Bain (1990a, 1990b), Gore (1990), Lalvani (1994), Tinning (1992c), and Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992).

[4]Gergen (1991) argued that in a postmodern period sensitive to multiple realities, the once-comfortable distinctions between *fact* and *fiction* have begun to dissolve. However, some may be uncomfortable with the postmodern collapsing of this distinction. For an interesting discussion of this issue in relation to life story work in sociology, see Nilsen (1994).

[5]The term *qualitative* will be used throughout this article to refer to a range of research traditions that adopt an internal-idealist ontology and a subjectivist-interactive epistemology (see Sparkes, 1992a). As a consequence, the issues and problems raised also apply to those critical research traditions that take as their starting point the qualitative quest to understand the world from the position of the other.

[6]For detailed discussions of the differing epistemological and ontological assumptions and sets of interest that inform the positivist, postpositivist, qualitative, and critical paradigms, along with the implications these have for the research process, see Fahlberg and Fahlberg (1994), Glassford (1987), J. Smith (1989, 1993), Sparkes (1989, 1992a, 1992c), and Tinning (1992a, 1992b).

[7]A brief glance at the forms of writing contained within the leading journals that focus upon PE and sport would suggest that both qualitative and critical researchers rely heavily upon realist tales. Indeed, given this dominance, I have found it difficult to provide examples of a range of different tales in PE and sport.

[8]I have been interested in how these two tales operate depending upon which is read first. One colleague said that she wished she had read the realist tale (Sparkes, 1994b) before the ''confessional'' tale (Sparkes, 1994a), as she needed the oppression story first to highlight the dilemmas embedded in the emerging relationship between myself and Jessica. Different reactions have been felt by those who read the realist tale first.

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