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“- How does it feel right now?” A Narrative Analysis of Sports-interviews After Performance

Introduction

Success stories and heroic tales are recurrently investigated narrative genres in literature (Propp, 1998), journalism (Lule, 2001) and, not the least, in sports (Hellström, 2014). In sports, we repeatedly hear athletes explain their performance at half-time or give us reflections on a recently completed competition. However, these stories are not produced in a social vacuum; they are part of a discursive framework and a product of time and place. The trajectories for a legitimate success story is limited and specific storylines are repeated and holds a specific dramaturgical structure. The heroic story typically follows a temporal structure, from a beginning to an end, where events and performances function as phases of a narrative journey towards a defining triumph (Hoebek et al. 2011). Which performances that constitutes the highlight of an athlete's career will always be culturally determined, since cultures produces heroes according to their own specific values and traditions (Whannel, 2002). Thereby, the “personal” story is both a contextually specific narrative and a culturally shared narrative.

Aims and empirical material

In this paper, we are seeking to investigate how success stories in sports as a central part of the athletes identity work, and how these stories also serve as symbols for values and morals of a wider sporting society (Kilger, 2017). Many narrative scholars within the area of sports have been interested in retrospective studies of sports heroes or historical media studies of successful athletes (Hargreaves, 2000; Hellström, 2014; Whannel, 2002). In this study, we would like to pay particular attention to how personal narratives are built ‘in-action’ and study which narrative elements are recurrent in the interviews and how is the own performance explained. Accordingly, we are interested in how such narratives of success and failure are co-constructed in the interview interaction and how they are structured. By investigating which master narratives that the participants recruit in their personal stories, this can help us to uncover shared normative storylines in elite sports. Moreover, we would like to illuminate

how the athletes are using 'temporal-identity' in the interviews as a way to construct a legitimate story of performance.

The data set will include after-performance media interviews from Swedish television (SVT) during the FIS Cross Country World Championships. More specifically, we are seeking to analyze between 15-20 after-race television interviews with Swedish athletes during the FIS Cross Country World Championships 2019 in Falun, Sweden.

Theoretical Considerations

DeFina (2009) emphasizes that in the construct of narrative-self in storytelling, this is done within a context, forming a narrative genre and at the same time shared societal narratives serve as building blocks when personal stories is to be told. Personal stories does not only reproduce moral values or opinions in society, they are a situated as a narrative practices. Thereby, the discursive context of personal narratives can help us to recognize how participants draw upon broader cultural stories. In this paper we are interested in how this 'in-action-narrative' in sports are constructed and are one part of the athletes identity work, and how they serve as symbols for values and morals of the sporting society (Kilger, 2017). Personal narratives includes a certain structure and function as a reservoir for shared societal knowledge and works as an essential source for cultural learning in sports. As a consequence, performances during an athlete's career will be assessed in relation to the events building up to this particular performance and the expectations of future performances (Hellström, 2014). In this work, we would like to contribute to the narrative field by analyzing sports-interview-talk (SIT) as it is deployed in direct connection to competition.

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