Engaging in socially just research is an important task for sport management scholars, and narrative inquiry (NI) is a qualitative methodology that some scholars have described as a social justice practice (Seiki et al., 2018). Therefore, in line with the conference’s goal of enhancing social justice through research, this presentation examines the use of narrative inquiry to facilitate socially just research. NI is a relatively new methodology appearing mostly in the discipline of education beginning in the early 2000s (Clandinin & Johnson, 2017) that seeks to understand human experience through individuals’ stories (Webster & Mertova, 2020). Researchers from other disciplines are exploring the use of NI, including a recent call by Stride and colleagues (2017) for the narrative approach to be applied in sport management research. Extending the authors’ argument, we specifically suggest that NI facilitates socially just research—research that creates a collaborative space and privileges marginalized voices to initiate social justice outcomes. McMahon and McGannon (2020) in their exploration of the experience of an abused athlete specifically chose NI because presenting research as a story allows the reader to connect with the participant on a deeper level than a generalized quantitative study, and even the disconnected feel of thematic analysis that de-contextualizes quotes (Stride et al., 2017). This type of empathy, developed through story-telling, is something that may actually move readers to social action. Therefore, in seeking to bring about meaningful change to the sport management field, we call on researchers to utilize NI.

There are three common strands that define the NI methodology. First and foremost, the research begins and ends with the lived experiences and stories of participants, in line with Dewey’s (1938) ontology of experience. Second, data is collected and/or analyzed by means of stories—that is narrative researchers are either collecting stories, analyzing all data from a technique based in story (i.e., Labovian structure; Saldana, 2016), or both. Third, narrative inquiry is considered a postmodern methodology that rejects the belief in one capital-T Truth in favor of the multiplicities of truths and the co-construction of knowledge (Webster & Mertova, 2020). Scholars have thus described NI as a relational methodology, wherein the researcher allows participants’ stories to guide all aspects of the research process.

In these ways, NI differs from the positivist ontological assumption of one truth, and the assumptions of postmodern, post-structural, and critical research that privilege social structure and social construction over individual experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Instead, NI begins and ends with the participants’ stories, not the researchers’ voice alone. Use of NI in sport management can provide researchers and practitioners the opportunity to listen and learn from the stories of people in sport, which is the foundation of socially just research. Therefore, the purpose of this presentation is twofold: (1) to provide an overview of NI and narrative methods and (2) to discuss what NI can add to sport management literature, especially considering the need to engage in socially just research.