

Narrative reconstruction and embodied identification: the dramatic narration of sporting values and its educational transformation

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Article

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Abstract

In Chinese schools and universities, PE and values lessons mostly push information one way. That kind of teaching rarely gets students to feel values deeply enough that they take hold. This paper looks at whether educational drama can turn things around—taking abstract sporting values and turning them into something students experience with their bodies. A framework of narrative reconstruction is proposed, drawing on ideas from narrative pedagogy, embodied cognition, and cultural reproduction theory. The framework is applied to one original dramatic production as a cultural text. The analysis focuses on three mechanisms: spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual. In the performance, these three built a temporary spectator-community. Inside that community, students stopped just watching. They joined in with their bodies. They began to identify with and jointly affirm values like resilience, fair play, and teamwork. What came out is a model of value dissemination that leans on narrative reconstruction and embodied identification. It also points to something worth noting: artistic practice has a special ability to serve as a place where values get worked out and taken in. The study pulls together sport pedagogy, cultural sociology, and performance studies. It suggests that educational drama is a real but still underexamined route for socializing sporting values among adolescents.

Introduction

Sport has long been seen as something that passes on values and shapes character (Coakley, 2015). In Chinese education policy, resilience, fair play, teamwork, and respect keep getting brought up as things young people need. But in practice, PE classes spend far more time on skills and fitness than on those values (Hardman et al., 2014). When teachers do try to teach values, they usually just tell students what the values mean and hope the ideas sink in. Freire (1970) once called that the banking model. In it, knowledge, even ethical knowledge, gets handed to passive learners. It is not built through experience. More and more studies say this kind of verbal teaching rarely stirs the emotional connection and personal stake that real value socialization needs (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Narvaez, 2006). We end up with a familiar gap: students can talk about values, but they rarely act on them in real sport and social situations (Lickona, 1991; Shuell, 1990). That gap between saying and doing keeps troubling PE and moral education.

At about the same time, a narrative turn in education began to pay attention to how stories shape thinking, identity, and moral reasoning (Bruner, 1991; Ricoeur, 1984). Narrative pedagogy says people do not build meaning through abstract statements. They build it by living in stories, sharing them, performing them (Dowling et al., 2015; Gill and Goodson, 2010). Bruner (1986) gave us two modes of thought. One is the paradigmatic mode. It runs on logic and checkable facts. The other is the narrative mode. It organizes experience around what people intend, do, and go through. The paradigmatic mode works for teaching facts, like the rules of a game. But you need the narrative mode for students to feel the moral weight of values as they play out in actual life. If values education stays locked in the paradigmatic mode—treating virtues as things to memorize—it never touches the narrative mode's ability

to pull learners into the texture of real choices. Around the same time, embodied cognition research was showing that physical experience is not just a vehicle for learning. It is part of how cognitive and emotional processes are built (Gallagher, 2005; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Merleau-Ponty (1962) was already saying that perception itself is embodied. We do not understand the world as minds on their own. We understand through our bodily situation. That means values are not just thought about. They are felt, and they are acted out in physical practice.

Theatre sits right where narrative and embodied performance meet. So it is no surprise that more researchers have been looking at it as a setting for experiential learning and moral education (Machon, 2013; White, 2013; Winston, 1999). Studies have looked at how taking part in or watching theatre can build empathy, help with perspective-taking, and clarify values (Gallagher, 2005; Neelands, 2009). Immersive, participatory forms—the ones that erase the line between stage and seating—can create temporary communities. In these communities, people try out ethical roles and commitments (Machon, 2013; White, 2013). But almost all this work has stayed inside literary, historical, or civic education. Applying theatre to the socialization of sporting values has barely been touched. This is true both empirically and theoretically (Aartun et al., 2022; Dowling et al., 2015). I think that is a real gap. Sport and theatre both run on carefully arranged bodies, spaces, and shared emotional rhythms. Both involve ritualized performances, codes of conduct, and the building of collective identities (Schechner, 2013). So there is unused potential in moving pedagogical insight from theatre over to sport. Right now, there is no full framework that explains how dramatic narration could be used systematically to help students internalize sporting values.

This paper tries to fill that gap. I put forward educational drama as a performative pathway for socializing sporting values. The framework I have built draws on narrative pedagogy (Bruner, 1991), embodied cognition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), and Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural reproduction. It centres on the idea of narrative reconstruction. By narrative reconstruction I mean the process of taking abstract values and turning them into concrete dramatic stories that participants can physically act out. In this way, the values become things they can identify with and internalize. The framework says that dramatic narration works through three performative mechanisms. They are spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual. Together they build a temporary spectator-community. In that community, students shift from watching passively to taking part bodily. They jointly affirm sporting values like resilience, fair play, and teamwork.

For my empirical work, I look at one original dramatic production. It was created at a Chinese university. I treat it as a cultural text (Fiske, 1987). The production works as an instrumental case (Yin, 2018). It is a clear, documentable example of theatre being used on purpose to get across sporting values. My main materials are the script, photos from the production, and news reports that are publicly available. I am not trying to measure changes in attitudes or behaviour. What I try to do is trace how the production's narrative and performance strategies set up conditions that make value identification possible. This way of working fits with the conceptual analysis and theoretical essay traditions that the journal welcomes. It

suits a study that is exploratory and wants to start a new conversation across disciplines while also giving a theoretical model that others can test later.

The paper runs as follows. The next section sets out the theoretical framework. It brings together narrative pedagogy, embodied cognition, and cultural reproduction to lay out three mechanisms of narrative reconstruction. Then I work through the production using those mechanisms. After that, the discussion draws out wider implications for global sport pedagogy and values education. The conclusion sums up the contribution, notes the limits, and points to future research.

Theoretical Framework

I bring together three areas—narrative pedagogy, embodied cognition, and cultural reproduction—to build a conceptual framework of narrative reconstruction. Together they give me the words I need to look at how dramatic narration turns abstract sporting values into embodied experiences that students can identify with.

Narrative Pedagogy: Story as a Vehicle for Value Construction

Narrative pedagogy starts from a simple idea. People make sense of their lives and form ethical commitments through telling stories (Bruner, 1991; Ricoeur, 1984). Bruner (1986) told us there are two basic modes of thought. The paradigmatic mode works through logical categories and things you can test. The narrative mode works through what people intend, do, and go through. The paradigmatic mode is good for teaching facts—what the rules of a sport are, what fair play means. But the narrative mode is what lets learners feel the moral weight of values as they unfold in real situations. Ricoeur (1984, 1992) added that narrative gives people the structure they use to build their identities over time. A person emplots life as a story, pulling past events together into a whole that points toward future commitments. In classrooms, narrative pedagogy changes the teacher. Instead of someone who hands over information, the teacher becomes someone who helps students make meaning. Students are asked to step into stories, live in them, and think about the value positions those stories carry (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Dowling et al., 2015).

When you take this into sport, the idea is that values usually taught by telling—resilience, teamwork, fair play—might come across better when they sit inside stories. A student who hears a coach say "be resilient" gets a statement. A student who watches a character fight through hardship on stage and is asked to join that fight in imagination meets resilience as something felt and shared. My idea of narrative reconstruction is about this. It is about taking abstract sporting values and deliberately re-storying them into dramatic narratives that participants can act out with their bodies. That is what makes those values open to the narrative mode of knowing.

Embodied Cognition: The Body as a Site of Learning

Embodied cognition theories push back against the old mind-body split. They say cognitive and emotional processes are shaped, at root, by bodily experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Gallagher, 2005). Merleau-Ponty (1962) gave us a way of seeing perception where the body is not just another object. The body is how we are in the world. We do not just have a body. We exist as embodied subjects, and meaning comes out of our sensory-motor engagement with what is around us. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) took this further into cognitive science. They showed that even abstract ideas like morality and justice are built on bodily schemas. Upright means virtuous. Balance means fair. Warmth means caring. In education, this means learning is more than just handling information. It fires up sensorimotor systems, emotional responses, and spatial awareness (Shapiro and Stolz, 2019). A student who just hears about resilience handles that value only through words. A student who stands, moves, and speaks during a dramatic performance takes resilience in through several channels at once—movement, hearing, seeing, and feeling.

Theatre itself is an art form that works through the body. That makes it a good fit for this kind of learning, the kind that uses several senses at once. Think about what happens when students are at a performance. Their bodies share the same room. Light changes, sound shifts, actors stand close by. Their breathing starts to sync with the feeling on stage. These are all bodily things. They line up with the three mechanisms I keep coming back to—changing how space works, giving people a role to step into, and building a shared ritual.

Cultural Reproduction: Theatre as a Site of Value Negotiation

Bourdieu (1986) gave us a way of looking at how values get passed on, fought over, and taken in inside institutions. He saw the school as a field where different kinds of capital—economic, social, cultural, symbolic—get spread around and struggled over. Cultural capital is the ways of thinking, the knowledge, and the skills that a given society values and that give advantage to the people who hold them. From this angle, sporting values like resilience and teamwork can be seen as forms of embodied cultural capital that schools try to pass on. But Bourdieu also made it clear that cultural reproduction is not a simple top-down process. It involves bargaining, misrecognition, and the active part of the people inside the field.

In my study, educational drama works as a place of cultural reproduction. Sporting values are not just forced onto passive students. Those values get worked out through bodies taking part. The spectator-community that forms during a dramatic performance becomes a temporary sub-field. Inside it, the usual rankings—teacher and student, expert and beginner—get set aside for a while. The people there produce the value meanings together. This lines up with Turner's (1969) idea of *communitas*. It is a liminal moment when social differences fade and something like a shared identity appears. The mechanisms I am working with are the tools that build this temporary sub-field and encourage value identification. Spatial reconfiguration changes how the learning space is set up. Role invitation gives

students temporary identities that fit the values being shown. Collective ritual brings bodily action and emotional expression into sync.

Synthesis: A Framework of Narrative Reconstruction

Pulling those three lines together, I propose a framework of narrative reconstruction. It explains how dramatic narration helps socialize sporting values. The framework has three connected parts.

Spatial reconfiguration leans on embodied cognition and the sociology of space (Lefebvre, 1991). It explains how the physical and symbolic set-up of the performance moves students from watching to being part of things. When the boundary between stage and seating comes down, the dramatic event creates a shared space. In that space, value-loaded situations are met head-on, not just looked at from a distance.

Role invitation leans on narrative pedagogy and speech-act theory (Austin, 1962; White, 2013). It is about how a performance can hand someone a temporary identity. That identity—fellow athlete, teammate, someone watching a moral choice unfold—fits with the values being shown. When students take that identity on, even just in their heads, something shifts. They stop thinking about a value from the outside. They face a choice that carries real weight.

Collective ritual leans on Turner's (1969) ritual theory and the embodied cognition writing. It explains how bodies moving together, sounds shared, and emotional rhythms that run through a group pull individual value identification together into a group-level consensus. In the liminal moment of collective ritual, the values being performed are not just seen. They are jointly affirmed through bodies.

This three-part framework guides the case analysis that comes next. It gives me a way to look at how a specific dramatic production sets up the conditions for value identification. It also carries wider weight. By connecting narrative, embodiment, and cultural reproduction, it offers a model that can travel. It helps us see how aesthetic practices can do socializing work in educational settings beyond the case I am studying here.

I should pull narrative reconstruction apart from the more common practices of dramatization and role-playing. Dramatization usually means acting out a text or scenario that is already there. The main teaching goal is to show or strengthen a known lesson. People follow a script but do not take part in reshaping its value content. Role-playing asks learners to take a view and make things up inside a loosely set situation. It often puts being spontaneous ahead of reworking the rules on purpose. Narrative reconstruction sits in a different space. It starts from the idea of consciously re-writing the value story. It is not just acting it out or trying a role on. It means changing the story so that abstract values turn into concrete situations. In these situations, people have to move through real moral tensions. Also, the fact that spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual all get going at the same time sets narrative reconstruction apart from ways that rely on just one mechanism. Dramatization depends mostly on sticking to the script. Role-playing depends on what individuals make up. Narrative

reconstruction brings together the physical setting, the identity of the spectator, and the communal body. They work as channels of value socialization that make each other stronger. That is what lets theatre move past just showing and into embodied identification.

Methods

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative, theory-driven way of working. It mixes conceptual analysis with textual analysis. The main research question is how educational drama, as a kind of cultural practice, can help socialize sporting values through narrative reconstruction and embodied identification. Because the question is exploratory, I use a case study design (Yin, 2018). I take a single instrumental case to throw light on the theoretical mechanisms I have put forward. The case was not picked for statistical generalization. It was picked because it can give rich, context-specific insight into what I am looking at.

Case Selection

The case I chose is an original dramatic production created and put on at a Chinese university. It was put together on purpose to get across sporting values—resilience, teamwork, fair competition. It does this by weaving historical events together with made-up dramatic episodes. Student actors, a director, and a script written together by university community members were all part of it. The production has gone up several times on campus. The script was made available for my research, which gave me a steady text to work from. I settled on this case for three reasons. First, there was a clear teaching intention to use theatre to get across sporting values. Second, I could get hold of different kinds of evidence—the script, photos, and media reports. Third, the production had immersive and participatory parts. That let me see how spectator-community dynamics play out.

Data Collection

The main thing I look at is the script. It has the full dialogues, scene descriptions, stage directions, and notes on staging. I also use production photos. They show how the space was set up and how audience and performers interacted. I use publicly available news reports too. They give some background on how the production was taken and what people thought it meant. Having these different sources lets me cross-check and look at the dramatic event from several angles as a cultural text (Fiske, 1987). I did not do interviews, surveys, or direct watching of audience responses. I am after the formal and performative features of the production, not measurable effects on individual people.

Analytical Framework

The analytical frame for this study is the three-part model of narrative reconstruction that I set out in the Theoretical Framework. Put simply, I look at how the production sets up the conditions for embodied identification with sporting values through three mechanisms: spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual. These mechanisms come out of a theoretical mix of narrative pedagogy, embodied

cognition, and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986; Bruner, 1991; Gallagher, 2005; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Turner, 1969). The case analysis that follows puts this frame to work on the cultural text.

Ethical Statement

I did not run any tests on people. I did not collect personal data from anyone. All the materials I looked at are either publicly available or formally published. So the research did not need formal ethical approval under my institution's rules. My looking at photos and reports sticks to publicly accessible content. No individuals can be picked out or judged.

Limitations

The study is limited by leaning on a single case. It is also limited by its focus on textual and performative features rather than what audiences did. The findings are thus theoretical and interpretive. They aim at conceptual ideas, not empirical generalizations. The low-data, high-theory way of working fits the conceptual analysis and theoretical essay traditions this journal welcomes. But it leaves open questions about whether the model can move to other cultural and institutional settings. Those questions need attention in future empirical research.

Case Analysis: Narrative Strategies in Bu Xi

I put the three-part framework—spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual—to work to see how Bu Xi builds the conditions for embodied identification with sporting values. I go through each mechanism. Then I look briefly at the media talk around the production.

Spatial Reconfiguration: Immersing the Audience in a Value-Laden Situation

Bu Xi opens by setting up spatial reconfiguration as a basic move. Instead of placing the audience at a distance, looking onto a framed stage, the production blurs the line between performance space and spectator space. In the sports-field scenes of Act I, the set pushes past the proscenium. Training equipment and track markings spill into the area that usually belongs to the audience. This use of space echoes Lefebvre (1991). He said space is never just neutral. It actively produces social relations. By putting students physically inside a made-up training ground, the production turns them from people watching sport into people who share an athletic space.

The spatial work gets stronger in the conflict scenes. In Act I, Scene 2, they argue over letting women join. The blocking puts the opposing sides—Fan Yibai and his backers on one side, the women applicants and their supporters on the other. The audience sits between them. That setup puts students in the spot of a community that has to work the matter out together. The ethical weight of the choice—should the club treat men and women the same—hits them as something right there in the space. It is not an idea floating around. The lighting backs this up. Internal arguments happen under bright, open light. That light asks you to look closely. When outside threat shows up, darkness or red washes cover the audience. You can almost feel the shared danger in your body.

Role Invitation: From Spectator to Moral Participant

Role invitation works through where the narrative places you and how it talks to you. It gives students a temporary identity that lines up with the sporting values being shown. In the script, words like "classmates," "fellow students," and "we" get this going. In the scene where the teacher Shang Hanming speaks up for letting women join, he does not just talk to the people on stage. He talks straight out to the audience. His words ask the student spectators to step into the identity of people who share a national community and face an ethical test together. This is what White (2013) calls an aesthetic of the invitation. The performance holds out a role. The audience, even if only in imagination, takes it.

The invitation hits hardest in Act II, Scene 2, when a rumor gets knocked down. The main character, Liu Changchun, gets accused of maybe turning traitor. His teammate Yuan Juhui throws the charge in a way that pulls the audience in as witnesses. Liu's answer works as a performative utterance (Austin, 1962). It brings back collective faith. Because the student spectators have already been placed inside the same community, they go through this moment of restored integrity not as outsiders. They are co-witnesses. Their own commitment to loyalty and national dignity gets quietly questioned and then quietly set right again.

Collective Ritual: Co-Affirming Values through Embodied Synchronization

The high point of narrative reconstruction in *Bu Xi* comes through collective ritual. The production sets up several moments where bodies move together and voices rise together. Individual moral feeling gets turned into a shared take on values. A gesture and a call keep coming back. They turn up when Liu is picked for international competition, at the dockside goodbye in Shanghai, and in the 2025 ending. When these moments happen in performance, they build what Turner (1969) called *communitas*. It is a state where normal social lines drop away. People build a collective identity through moving and acting together.

The pre-match ritual in Act I is a good example. The team takes up the gesture and the call. The script has the actors turn outward. The audience gets pulled into the circle. Student spectators are asked to stand and join the shout. What is happening here, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) might say, is embodied cognition. Getting up, raising your arm, putting your voice together with others—that builds teamwork and togetherness not through words but through the senses. For as long as the ritual goes on, the value is no longer a lesson from outside. It becomes part of the moment people are living.

The closing scene carries that ritual pattern across time. In the 2025 epilogue, students of today do the gesture again. They read out the names of athletes from the past. The audience, after following the whole story, is drawn into a final ritual that says sporting values pass from one generation to the next. That last moment of collective ritual finishes the narrative reconstruction. Values that started out abstract have been taken into the body, acted out, and set firm through ritual.

Media Coverage: Constructing a Public Discourse Space

The main thing I look at here is the dramatic event itself. But the production has also moved into wider public talk. Several media outlets have covered Bu Xi. They describe it as an arts project that brings old sporting stories back to life and makes people think about whether those values still matter in student life today. That kind of coverage tells me the performance reaches past the school setting. It joins a bigger cultural conversation. That conversation asks whether aesthetic forms can help socialize ideals like resilience, fair play, and sticking together. Through its narrative and performance strategies, the production builds a temporary spectator-community inside the theatre. At the same time, it opens a space where sporting values can be talked about in public.

Discussion

Reshaping Values Education through Performative Narrative Reconstruction

The case analysis has shown how spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual work inside a dramatic production to build embodied identification with sporting values. What I take from this goes beyond the single production I studied. Most telling, the drama-plus-sport approach seems to give a theoretically sensible answer to a problem that keeps coming up in values education. That problem is the gap between learning ethical ideas in your head and really internalizing them.

Standard ways of teaching sporting values lean heavily on direct instruction. The thinking goes that values move in a straight line from understanding words to acting on them. But as Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984) showed, learning that stays locked inside words and symbols hardly ever stirs the emotional depth and personal stake that real value identification needs. Narrative pedagogy (Bruner, 1991; Ricoeur, 1984) and embodied cognition research (Gallagher, 2005; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) have each come to a similar point. Meaning and moral commitment are not built just through thinking. They are built through bodily involvement with stories in specific situations. The drama-plus-sport model I have been working through brings those theoretical lines into line. When you re-story abstract sporting ideals—resilience, fair play, teamwork—into dramatic narratives that students can physically enter and perform together, educational drama moves the place where values are learned. It moves it from the detached classroom into a space of experience and taking part. Values stop being things to remember. They become problems to feel, choices to act on, things to affirm together (Neelands, 2009; Winston, 1999).

The case also shows that you do not need big production budgets for this to work. Spatial reconfiguration can be done just by moving classroom furniture around (Gallagher and Lindgren, 2015). Role invitation can be set up through well-written dialogue and direct talk to the audience. Collective ritual can be as small as a shared gesture. So the drama-plus-sport model has a real chance of working across very different resource settings. That matters, in practice, for schools and colleges in communities that do not have much.

Universal Implications across Cultural and Educational Contexts

This study comes from one specific place and time. But the basic things it looks at—narrative reconstruction and embodied identification—matter well beyond that. In most parts of the world, sport is expected to pass on values like resilience, fair play, teamwork, and respect (Arnold, 1997; Coakley, 2015). And in most places, teachers find it hard to make those values stick as more than just words (Hardman et al., 2014). The path I have laid out here, combining narrative reconstruction, spatial immersion, and collective ritual, gives a template that can be picked up and moved. The basic idea holds whether you are in a high-pressure sport setting or a place where PE has very little. When value messages sit inside aesthetic forms that pull people in bodily, the socializing effect is much stronger than what direct teaching can do.

You can see the cross-cultural point more clearly by thinking through three different education settings. Each has its own problem for value socialization in sport. In each, the mechanisms would work in ways that fit the place.

In North America, competitive school sport runs deep. A win-at-all-costs attitude often fills the culture. The ethical strains are well known—performance drugs, teams that shut people out, schoolwork getting pushed aside (Coakley, 2015; Power and Sheehan, 2013). In that setting, educational drama could offer a space for stepping back and thinking. Spatial reconfiguration could turn a gym or locker room into somewhere that ethical problems get faced instead of pushed down. Role invitation would let student-athletes step inside the view of an opponent, a hurt teammate, or a coach under strain. It would build the kind of understanding that the heat of competition usually kills. Collective ritual, done as talk after a show or shared exercises to step out of a role, could lock in the values of fair play and mutual respect that the performance has made feel real. Institutions would not need to drop their sports programs. They would add a set-up chance to think in a structured way. That is something most sport courses still lack.

In much of Europe, PE is moving toward health, lifelong activity, and broad taking part. It is not about picking elites (Hardman et al., 2014; Green, 2008). Here, value socialization hits a different snag. The problem is not too much competitive pressure. It is not enough moral weight. When sport gets talked about mostly as health behaviour, the ethical sides—teamwork, fairness, resilience—can slide into the background. Educational drama could put narrative and ethical depth back into sport. A production that stages moments of sporting choice—helping an opponent who is struggling, calling a foul on yourself, pushing on when you are worn out—brings back the value side that a health-only frame hides. Spatial reconfiguration here might mean turning a school hall into a space that hints at the history or social meaning of sport. Role invitation could pull in students who normally do not care about PE by putting them inside a story where sport has ethical stakes. Collective ritual, fitted to the way European schools work, could be circles for thinking together or building scenes as a group, rather than high-energy action in unison.

Now think about a very different setting. In places where sport infrastructure is thin—rural schools in developing countries, for instance—drama has a real edge. It needs almost nothing in the way of

materials. But it can still bring in sporting values that would otherwise stay out of reach because there are no fields or trained staff. Spatial reconfiguration here does not need a theatre. A classroom works. A spot under a tree. A village square. You give the space a new meaning for a while. Role invitation lets students try on identities—athlete, official, fan—even where organized sport is rare. That builds a base of value understanding. Later, when things get better, that base is still there. Collective ritual can pull in local ways of performing—story circles, call-and-response, group movement—and weave sporting values into practices that already feel close. That makes the values feel more real and last longer. So the model has a special pull for fairness. It does not wait for buildings and gear before value work can begin.

This also points toward thinking again about how arts education and physical education sit together. They have been kept apart in institutions for a long time (Eccles and Barber, 1999; Greene, 1995). The case I studied shows that dramatic performance can act as a bridge. It lets the ethical side of sport be opened up with the kind of mental care and emotional reach that belong to the arts. Future curriculum design could bring performative and athletic practices together. It could treat them not as separate boxes but as ways of growing values that work with each other (Carlomagno et al., 2025; Lambert, 2020). Narrative reconstruction gives a way into designing that kind of joined-up work. Teachers can pick out the sporting values that matter. They can build dramatic stories that put those values into real situations. They can use spatial, role-based, and ritual tools to help students identify with them through their bodies.

Critical Reflections on Practical and Ethical Constraints

The drama-plus-sport model holds a lot of promise. But it also runs into real practical and ethical snags. One big one is the know-how it asks of teachers. Putting together a story that works on stage and stays true to both history and teaching aims asks for skills in writing, directing, setting up space, and holding a group (McMahon et al., 2018). Those skills rarely sit in a single teacher, or even in a standard arts department. Without steady teacher training and backing from the institution, the model could end up leaning on a few unusual people or one-off outside help. That would hold back how far it can spread in settings with few resources. Some possible ways around this would be making script templates that can be changed for local use, weaving drama methods into PE teacher training, and setting up links between schools and local theatre groups.

A second worry is the ethical side of stirring up group feeling. The same things that make immersive drama work—bodies moving together, voices rising together, feelings catching—can, without care, blur the line between choosing freely and being quietly pushed (Machon, 2013; White, 2013). History gives us cases of big shows used for pushing ideas, and that should keep us awake. Collective ritual methods carry no politics in themselves. Their ethical weight depends fully on what values they are used to push and how much real choice people have. In my case, the values being put forward were not disputed and were okayed by the school. But those same methods could, in theory, be used to press people into line or sell a narrow view. So any classroom use of this model needs to leave real room for stopping and talking things through (Fisher and Frey, 2007). It needs to let students step away from participatory rituals

without being marked down. It needs to be open about the fact that the whole performance is put together. Teachers also need to learn the gap between helping someone choose freely and pushing them into forced agreement.

A third problem is the kind of evidence this study rests on. I went with low data and high theory on purpose. I put theoretical thinking and close reading ahead of measuring what audiences did afterward. That means the claims here are conceptual ideas—possible ways value socialization could work. They are not things that have been checked against hard results. To move from possible to tested, future work needs longitudinal mixed-methods designs. You could give surveys before and after to see how students' tie to sporting values shifts. You could run follow-up talks to check how long any changes last. You could compare what happens in different settings. Randomized controlled trials, putting drama-plus-sport next to standard teaching and next to other hands-on ways like service learning or team-building workshops, would also give stronger proof of how well the model works next to other ways.

The model came out of one cultural setting. So there is a real question about whether it can move to other places easily. The story I worked with connects to a shared past and a specific set of cultural signs. Other places may need other kinds of stories to pull out the same kind of tie. The mechanisms—the way space is changed, the way a role is handed over, the way a group ritual is built—are probably solid across cultures. The particular stories that bring them to life are not. Work that compares different cultural settings would tell us much more about how these things play out.

Conclusion

I set out to see whether and how educational drama could work as a performative route for socializing sporting values. Moving past the usual didactic way, I put forward a theoretical frame built around narrative reconstruction and embodied identification. I showed how it works through three connected mechanisms: spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual. My looking at Bu Xi as a cultural text showed that when those mechanisms are put together with some skill, abstract values can turn into felt, bodily experiences. Inside a temporary spectator-community, the people taking part can find and jointly affirm sporting ideals.

The main thing this work adds is its pulling together of different fields. By connecting sport pedagogy, cultural sociology, and performance studies, I have tried to show that the arts and physical education—long kept in separate corners—can be brought together. They can be brought together in ways that make theoretical sense and mean something in practice. The idea of narrative reconstruction gives a way into seeing how aesthetic forms can rework the conditions under which values get internalized. It moves the place of learning from taking things in passively to joining in with the body. The three-mechanism frame—spatial reconfiguration, role invitation, and collective ritual—gives a tool that can travel. It can be used for designing and checking similar work in different education settings.

What I have offered here is a first look, not a final word. I leaned on a single case and a low-data, high-theory way of working. So the claims stay at the level of possible ways things could work, not results that have been locked down. The ethical and practical problems I talked through—what this asks of teachers, the risks of stirring feelings, the way the story stuff is tied to one culture—all say that using this model needs care, an eye on context, and solid checking. Future research should add to this conceptual work with longitudinal, mixed-methods designs that follow what happens, and under what conditions, when drama-based work leads to lasting shifts in how students think and act. Studies that compare across levels of education, cultural settings, and sporting traditions would test how far the model can really travel and how sturdy it is.

To close, I want to put forward a plain thought. Building sporting values, which so often gets boiled down to giving talks, might grow a lot richer when young people get the chance to walk into stories, live inside roles, and carry out commitments with their bodies. Calling for work across fields is not just about changing the curriculum. It is a call to think again about the very conditions where ethical learning happens. Educational drama, in talk with physical education, gives us one promising place for that rethinking—still mostly not looked at. As schools and colleges everywhere try to work out how to grow people who are not just skilled but also responsible, the drama-plus-sport model points to a way ahead that has some theory under it and can bend to fit different places.

Declarations

Author Contribution

Author contributions WY conceived the study, developed the theoretical framework, and provided critical revisions throughout the manuscript. RS drafted the initial manuscript and collected the source materials. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version.

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Data Availability Statement

The unpublished script of Bu Xi that supports the findings of this study is the property of the Qingfeng Drama Society of Northeastern University and is not publicly available. The script was accessed with permission for the current study. Restrictions apply to the availability of this material, but it is available from the authors upon reasonable request and with permission of the Qingfeng Drama Society of Northeastern University. Production photographs are also available from the authors upon reasonable

request. All other data analysed in this study are derived from publicly available sources. Media reports cited are accessible through their respective public platforms. No new datasets were generated.

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