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MAVM 2023-2025

Story / Project Form

VJM7104 CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

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Introductory notes

VJM7104 CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION: Multimedia Project / Story Form

- The theory project form sits tightly with the practical project form and the practical module. However rather than training practical methodologies and processes used in multimedia journalism projects. It develops students academic and contextual learning and helps to inform the choices they make in the practical project form.
- All students will need to research the wider contextual issues of their story in the Theory Project form to ensure that their practical work is underpinned by a solid understanding of the relevant and contextual issues.
- At your initial research stage, it's important to keep all your research materials organized.
- The production brief and project form sit side by side and inform each-other. Your practice will inform your theory and your theory will inform your practice. For example, you intend to do your practical reporting on children living with autism. For your theory module, you will be looking at the facts, data and information about people living with autism in China and abroad, which will reflect in the "Research Sources," "Research Questions" and "Research Proposal" sections.
- You may also perform some research on media representation of people living with disabilities and best practices for reporting on people with disabilities. From this research you find that people living with autism are rarely directly quoted or given a chance to tell their own stories. This might inform your own reporting so that you are sure to include the voices of people living with autism. In another story and example you might read that for your target publication, most users consume the news on their mobile, in this case you'd certainly want your story to be optimised on your chosen platform for mobile viewing. These research should be reflected in your "Research Sources" section, but you don't need to write about them in your "Research Questions" and "Research Proposal"
- Plagiarism - avoiding plagiarism is actually easy - if you are well researched, and well informed about your subject you'll know what is important and interesting to tell and you won't need to copy from others. Do your research well, and log it so you can find and refer back to it. Check [the plagiarism and patch-writing page](#)

Summary of the story:

The story revolves around Qin Yujie, a young baseball player and an orphan, training with the "Little Dragons Baseball Team at the Lindai Central Primary School, China. He was brought to the school in Xujiadai Village of Zhejiang Province, by head coach Li Wei from the Ulanqab Children's Welfare Institute in Inner Mongolia.

The Xujiadai Village, also known as the "the First Baseball Village in China." and the school has been training rigorously and organizes a residential closed training program every year, during the July summer vacation. Their goal is to prepare for the National Youth Baseball Championship, scheduled to take place in the village in August. As the defending champions of the Under-10 category, this year's new team will face fresh challenges.

Qin Yujie, who came to Lindai Central Primary School in 2020 has a chance to build his career in baseball if he continues to excel. If he stops playing, he will have to return to the welfare institute. Therefore, the August competition is crucial for Qin Yujie, as his performance will determine whether he can continue to stay on the team.

Background:

China has established a comprehensive support system for children in distress, with the Law on the Protection of Minors at its core, covering aspects such as livelihood, education, healthcare, rehabilitation, and guardianship. The current policy concept is also undergoing a change, from "providing simple assistance to basic necessities" to "achieving overall development through capacity development and empowerment".

Although there are policy goals, traditional centralized institutional nursing has natural deficiencies in tapping into human potential, planning career paths, and other aspects. The growth needs of children in difficult situations cannot be diversified and personalized, which to some extent affects their future social integration and development.

Sports (particularly team sports) are empirically recognized as an effective means to cultivate discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence in adolescents, thereby facilitating their social integration. Its universal nature, which transcends social backgrounds, offers an innovative and effective pathway for the "capacity-building and empowerment" of children in distress.

This study examines the case of Qin Yujie, an orphan whose story of seeking to change his fate through baseball serves as a microcosm of the aforementioned context. The case starkly reveals a core tension within the "empowerment" process: while providing opportunities, the model that tightly binds continued participation to competitive performance also places immense psychological and physical pressure and uncertainty on children without family support. Through this authentic case study, this research aims to critically examine the pain points of empowerment practices, offering insights for promoting the development of a more scientific and humane support system.

Story presentation:

The story is presented in video format, a short documentary, including interviews, random interviews, and documentary segments.

Story Construction

The narrative unfolds through the perspective of the characters, with Qin Yujie's viewpoint serving as the main thread throughout the story. His personal growth, challenges, and emotional evolution form the framework for the development of events. The coach, the team, the village, and the championship tournament are all revealed through his experiences and interactions.

Story development arc

- **Beginning:** Set up a plot to engage the audience's Curiosity Gap.
Setting: Introduce the unique environment of Xujiadai Village, known as "China's First Baseball Village," and the glory and pressure surrounding the Lindai Central Primary School's Little Dragon baseball team as the defending champions. Highlight the intensity of the closed-door summer training and the importance of the national tournament in August.

Protagonist's Introduction: Present Qin Yujie, his background as an orphan, and his significant transition from a child welfare institute in Inner Mongolia to the rural village in Zhejiang. Describe how Coach Li Wei selected and brought him here. Skillfully incorporate opening interviews or documentary clips to introduce Qin Yujie's "special circumstances" and the stakes involved.

- **Progressive Development:** Build tension and develop character depth. Depict Qin Yujie's daily life and his participation in the intensive training camp. Showcase the day-to-day rigor of practice, the pressures faced by the children, internal and external obstacles, deepening relationships, and the integration of background information.

The national tournament begins, heightening the tension. Qin Yujie and the team advance through the rounds, moving closer to the finals.

- **Climax:** The crucible of the tournament. Portray the U10 National Youth Baseball Championship with peak tension and emotional intensity, focusing on key games, particularly Qin Yujie's performance during the tournament.
- **Falling action:** Qin Yujie feels unwell and delivers an average performance in the games. In the final match, he remains on the bench as a substitute, his emotions contrasting sharply with the fervent atmosphere on the field.
- **Ending:** Find meaning and resolution. The team wins the championship, but Qin Yujie's performance remains mediocre. He will continue to stay with the team for the time being. The ending retains a degree of openness, moving beyond mere victory or defeat to provoke deeper reflection on the "capacity-building empowerment model" and the fate of children in difficult circumstances.

Research Sources

(complete and refined by week 2) Continue to refine during pre-production, production and post-production.

Combines a background contextual reading list of the research sources you will refer to develop your knowledge about your chosen story and issue. This does not mean the journalistic primary / secondary sources you'll be utilising as a part your actual reporting - however some of the references included here may eventually provide sources you do actually utilise later in your reporting.

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List quality journalism <i>hard news and feature stories</i> from news orgs, individual journalists, photographers / writers / radio journalists / video journalists and multimedia journalists on the same subject. • Put <i>top 3 of each(hard news and feature stories)</i> here and include a brief literature review paragraph for each source. • List the web links. <p>Hard News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting the Healthy Growth of Children in Difficult Circumstances: Five Departments Deploy Thematic Activities Summary: The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Education, and four other departments have jointly issued a notice to deploy the "Nurturing
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Hearts and Protecting the Future Together" theme activity in 2025, aiming to promote the physical and mental health of children in difficult circumstances. The activity covers five main aspects: strengthening mental health monitoring, carrying out theme-based care activities, expanding the service functions of institutions, guiding broad social participation, and exploring the empowerment of digital technology. Through the joint efforts of multiple institutions, diverse activity formats, optimized service functions, linked social resources, and the application of digital means, the activity aims to comprehensively focus on the mental health of children in difficult circumstances, promote early detection, early intervention, and early service, and provide comprehensive care and support for these children.

Source: Sina

<https://finance.sina.com.cn/jjxw/2025-05-29/doc-ineyfkha9676325.shtml>

- **20th April is the “World Orphans Day”**

Summary: April 20th is designated as World Orphans Day by the World Orphans Campaign (WOC), a global charity organization. The day aims to raise awareness of the issues faced by orphans and vulnerable children and provides a platform for related activities. WOC plans to address the rights and issues of orphans and vulnerable children worldwide by 2035. Activities on this day include visiting orphanages, providing food, toys, educational materials, legal support, and more, encouraging participation from all sectors of society. WOC operates in 130 countries, including Bangladesh, implementing various support programs such as education scholarships, living expenses, apprenticeship counseling, medical facilities. WOC aims to launch projects like "Orphan Code" to equip orphans and vulnerable children with skills and improve their future.

Source: <https://www.worldorphansday.org/>

- **Hyperspecialization Is Ruining Youth Sports—And the Kids Who Play Them**

Summary: This article explores the growth trend of early sports specialization in the United States and its negative impacts, including increased risk of injury and decreased success rates in sports. It specifically links this issue to socioeconomic status, pointing out that families with more resources can afford the private coaching and travel required for specialization, which in turn indicates a higher risk of their children suffering serious harm. This article challenges the traditional notion of "more is better" in youth sports through the use of data and expert research, thus becoming a powerful report. It critically examines how market forces and social pressures can transform a potential liberating activity into a physically and psychologically destructive one, reinforcing rather than alleviating structures of inequality.

Source: ProPublica

<https://www.propublica.org/article/hyperspecialization-is-ruining-youth-sportsand-the-kids-who-play-them>

- **MLB's China operation knocking it out the ball park**

Summary: Analysis of the Effectiveness of Major League Baseball's Promotion of Baseball in China. Since entering the Chinese market in 2007, MLB has driven the rapid development of baseball in China through youth championships, online courses, and “First Pitch” clinics. By 2019, China's active baseball population had exceeded 20 million, with 60% of the fans joining since 2016. The MLB Cup Youth Championship has expanded from 5 cities in 2008 to 20 cities in 2021, with 400 participating teams. Additionally, the return of baseball to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the release of documentaries and animations have also played a positive role in promoting baseball in China.

Source: Chinadaily

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202108/20/WS611f180aa310efa1bd66a0b8.html>

Feature Stories

● 9 Impactful Ways to Support Orphans Today

Summary: This article explores the global orphan crisis and nine effective ways to support orphans. Due to poverty, disease, and conflict, millions of children worldwide are abandoned or deprived of family care. The article proposes methods such as economic assistance, educational support, healthcare, promoting adoption, mentorship, advocacy for orphan rights, community integration programs, psychosocial support services, and sustainable development projects to improve the living conditions and future success of orphans. It emphasizes that supporting orphans requires a collective effort and commitment to create a supportive and nurturing environment.

Source:

<https://newsamenders.com/9-impactful-ways-to-support-orphans-today/>

● In China, 86.3% of Orphans live in rural areas, and some of them have Psychological Problems

Summary: This article primarily focuses on the living conditions of orphans in China, highlighting that there are currently 712,000 orphans in the country, with 86.3% residing in rural areas. Approximately 10% are raised in welfare institutions, while 90% are raised in a dispersed manner. These orphans face a multitude of issues, including economic, psychological, and health-related challenges, and they require care and assistance from all sectors of society. Through specific cases, the article illustrates the living conditions of orphans in welfare institutions and families, as well as the difficulties they encounter during their growth. Experts suggest that orphan assistance should shift from merely ensuring survival to creating conditions that help orphans integrate into society and establish their own families and careers.

Source: <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/edu/2012/06-07/3944959.shtml>

● The Chinese Baseball Prospects Vying to Break Into the Big Leagues

Summary: This article tells the story of Chinese teenage baseball players striving to make it into Major League Baseball (MLB) in the United States. In

	<p>recent years, about half a dozen Chinese teenagers have been signed by MLB teams, but whether they will make it to the big leagues remains uncertain. The article focuses on the journey of pitcher Yi Jian, who was signed by the Milwaukee Brewers, highlighting his personal growth and the challenges faced by Chinese baseball. These challenges include low participation rates, lack of facilities, and the absence of baseball from the Olympics. However, for children from poor families, baseball may be the only way to change their destiny.</p> <p>Source: Sixth Tone https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1005854</p>
2	<p>• Who are the <i>leading local Chinese</i> and <i>global international academics</i> specialising on your subject?</p> <p>• Give names, brief biographies (and weblink to profile or work if possible)</p> <p>Local Chinese</p> <p>Fan Hong Brief Biography: Fan Hong is Professor at Shanghai Sport University, who has taught at multiple universities in the UK and Australia for a long time, is an internationally renowned expert in Chinese sports research. The research field is extensive, covering Chinese sports history (ancient and modern), sports and gender, sports policy, Olympic studies, cross-cultural studies, and more. Edited the Routledge Handbook of Sport in China and served as the editor in chief of the Asian Journal of Sport History and Culture. Weblink: https://www.ioa.org.gr/authors/prof-fan-hong</p> <p>Sui Yan Brief Biography: Professor Sui Yan is the Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at Communication University of China, the Convener of the Discipline Evaluation Group for Journalism and Communication under the State Council's Degree Committee, and a member of several national talent programs. He also serves as Vice President of multiple academic societies. His research focuses on internet group communication, communication semiotics, and media culture. He has published multiple papers in Chinese Social Sciences and authored two books with Routledge. Weblink: http://zgcmdx.gbpxfw.cn/detail/7522.html</p> <p>Global International</p> <p>Ramón Spaaij Brief Biography: Professor Ramón Spaaij is a professor at the College of Sport, Health and Engineering at Victoria University and also a professor of sociology of sport at the University of Amsterdam. He has served as a senior researcher at La Trobe University and deputy director of the La Trobe Refugee Research Center. He is a great sociologist whose research mostly revolves around social cohesion, conflict, and social change. He has also conducted extensive research on sports sociology and terrorism sociology, and has achieved some success, especially in the fields of sports, social cohesion, violent extremism, and "lone wolf" terrorism research. He has published numerous peer-reviewed</p>

journal articles, books, and book reviews.

Professor Spay is a member of the International Sociological Association, the Australian Sociological Association, and the International Association of Sports Sociology, as well as a writer for international, national, and local media.

Weblink: <https://www.vu.edu.au/contact-us/ramon-spaij>

Lawrence Wenner

Brief Biography: Lawrence A. Wenner is a renowned VonderAhe Professor of Communication and Ethics at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He also works at the School of Communication and Fine Arts and the School of Film and Television. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1977. Wenner has held notable positions such as the William Evans Fellow at the University of Otago, the Diederich Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Marquette University, and the Louise Davies Professor of Contemporary Values in America at the University of San Francisco.

Wenner's research is extensive, encompassing nine books and approximately 130 scholarly journal articles and book chapters. His work critically examines media content, the ethical dimensions of race and gender portrayals in advertising, audience experiences with television, and the values and consumption of mediated sports. Notable publications include *Media, Sports and Society*, *MediaSport*, and *Sport, Beer, and Gender: Promotional Culture and Contemporary Social Life*. His most recent works include *Sport, Media and Mega-Events* and *Fallen Sports Heroes*, *Media*, and *Celebrity Culture*.

In 2018, Wenner received the International Communication Association's inaugural Legacy Award for his significant contributions to sports communication. The same year, the journal *Communication and Sport*, which he founded and edits, won the PROSE Award for "Best New Journal in Social Sciences." He is also a former two-term Editor-in-Chief of the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* and the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, and he edits the "Studies in Communication and Sport" book series for the Peter Lang Publishing Group.

Wenner's expertise is widely recognized, with media appearances and interviews featured across various platforms. His contributions have been honored with awards such as the LMU Rains Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity and the Honorary Member Award from the International Sociology of Sport Association.

Weblink: <https://cfa.lmu.edu/faculty/distinguishedprofessors/>

- 3 • **List any short or long form documentary films weblink that have been made on the subject.**

- **Give a brief one or two sentence literature review to accompany each film.**

Touch Out

literature review: The film focuses on the growth stories of a group of disadvantaged children in the "Strong Baseball Angel Baseball Base" in the suburbs of Beijing. These children are mostly left behind children, orphans, or from poor families, seeking their life direction through baseball training. The film features two teenagers, Ma Wei and Liang Zhengshuang (Xiao Shuang), as the main characters, depicting their transformation from rebellion and isolation to gradually integrating into the team and finding their goals.

Weblink: <https://www.gycuz.com/reference-resources>

Somewhere Between

literature review: Of the roughly 80,000 girls who have been adopted from China since 1989—a decade after China implemented its One Child Policy—the film intimately

follows four teenagers: Haley, Jenna, Ann, and Fang. These four wise-beyond-their-years, yet typical American teens, reveal a heartbreaking sense of self-awareness as they attempt to answer the uniquely human question, “Who am I?” They meet and bond with other adoptees, some journey back to China to reconnect with the culture, and some reach out to the orphaned girls left behind. In their own ways, all attempt to make sense of their complex identities. Issues of belonging, race, and gender are brought to life through these articulate subjects, who approach life with honesty and open heart.

Weblink: https://tubitv.com/movies/312542/somewhere-between?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Foster

literature review: The documentary Foster, which delves into the American foster care system. By following foster care providers like Beavers and other participants in the system, the documentary reveals the kindness and hard work of those involved in foster care, as well as the challenges and struggles faced by foster children, such as the abandonment experienced by 13-year-old Denyshia and the disciplinary issues that led 16-year-old Dasani to be sent to a juvenile detention center. Despite the dedication of the staff, the foster care system still faces numerous difficulties in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children.

Weblink: https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1YH4y197NV/?spm_id_from=333.337.search-card.all.click

- 4
- List the key *domestic and international Non-profit organizations or sectors* working on your subject.
 - Give names, brief summaries of what the org does and weblink to website.

Domestic

China Youth Development Foundation

Summary: The center is dedicated to the protection, research, inheritance, and promotion of China's intangible cultural heritage, including the organization of surveys, documentation, archiving, and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage.

Weblink: <https://www.cydf.org.cn/#/>

Chinese Baseball Association

Summary: The Chinese Baseball Association is a national and industry - based social organization, voluntarily composed of units and individuals who love and engage in baseball and related work. It is a non - profit social organization. Its purpose is to popularize and promote the development of baseball in China and to represent China in the activities of international organizations such as the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) and the Baseball Federation of Asia (BFA).

Weblink: <http://baseball.sport.org.cn/>

Yao Foundation

Summary: Initiated by the renowned basketball player Yao Ming, the foundation is committed to supporting the health and development of young people, especially through sports and education programs such as the Yao Ming Foundation Hope Primary School Basketball Season, to help young people in impoverished areas of China grow. Its work directly focuses on using sports to provide development opportunities for disadvantaged young people and is a typical case of sports promoting social mobility. The foundation's own publicity and media coverage also constitute important sports philanthropy narratives.

Weblink: <https://www.yaofoundation.cn/index.html>

International

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Summary: UNICEF is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide. Established in 1946 after World War II to help children affected by the war, it later became a permanent part of the UN system in 1953, broadening its mission to support long-term child welfare.

Weblink: <https://www.sportanddev.org/>

International Platform on Sport and Development

Summary: The International Sports and Development Platform (Sportanddev) is a leading global center for using sports to achieve social, economic, and environmental goals. It is the primary global platform for sharing knowledge, creating good practices, promoting coordination, and driving the relationship between sports and development.

Weblink: <https://www.sportanddev.org/>

World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC)

Summary: The World Baseball and Softball Federation is the international governing body for baseball and softball, headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. The World Baseball and Softball Federation is composed of 138 countries and regions, with 189 member organizations representing over 65 million athletes and approximately 150 million spectators worldwide. The World Baseball and Softball Federation is primarily responsible for international events related to national teams, various world championships, and Olympic events. In order to better communicate with members and stakeholders, the SC has developed a new organizational introduction to ensure that all of its strategies and actions benefit every audience member.

Weblink: <https://www.wbssc.org/en>

5 **List any other relevant works or people connected to the subject.**

Documentaries and Videos:

PURSUE

Summary: Documentary focuses on the growth of Chinese baseball youth, showcasing the current situation and future prospects. The film showcases the different training philosophies and training models of two coaches, Zhang Baoshu and Sun Lingfeng, through interviews: Zhang Baoshu focuses on discovering talented players while also balancing academic performance, while Sun Lingfeng emphasizes cultivating "rough jade" players from scratch. In addition, the film also records the passionate growth process of baseball teenagers and the significance of baseball as an educational method. Weblink: https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1DT4y1q7nk/?spm_id_from=333.337.search-card.all.click

Koshien: Japan's Field of Dream

Summary: The film spotlights Japan's Kōshien Championship, a historic high - school baseball event deeply rooted in Japanese society. By documenting the pre - tournament journey of the 2018 Yokohama Hana High School baseball team and its coach, it explores baseball's unique "life - and - death" status in Japan and its integration into tradition and values. Also, through stories of losers and non - starters, the film reveals Japan's emphasis on collective sacrifice and discipline. Weblink: https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1eF411P7wN/?spm_id_from=333.337.search-card.all.click

The danger of a single story

Summary: Our lives, our culture, are all built up from a series of stories. Novelist Chimamanda Adichie tells us the story of how she found her voice, and also tells us that if we hear a story about someone or another country, we will have illusions. Weblink: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?subtitle=en

Survey Report:

Teen Sports and Mental Health: 10 Benefits and Overall Impact

Summary: This article is a data-driven report that explores the positive mental health outcomes of youth sports participation, such as reduced rates of stress and depression. However, it also includes a critical caveat, noting that during the pandemic, adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds who played sports experienced a worsening of symptoms. This nuance makes it a good example of hard news that acknowledges both the liberating and constraining aspects of sports empowerment. The article cites multiple studies, providing a factual basis for the dual-nature of the sports empowerment model you are investigating. Weblink: <https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/sports-and-mental-health/>

Report on the State of Children in China

Summary: This article was jointly completed by the University of Chicago and the "China Children's Welfare Report" by policy researchers from Peking University and ChapinHall. Based on data from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), it reveals the significant disparities in education, economic status, and emotional health between rural and urban children in China. The report analyzes the impact of China's "hukou" (household registration) system on the development of rural children and offers policy

recommendations to improve the situation of rural children. These recommendations include expanding urban public service access for children, increasing public investment in early care and education in rural areas, and establishing a comprehensive child service and protection system.

Weblink: https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Chapin_CFPSReport2016_ENGLISH_FNLweb-1.pdf

Prominent Figures:

Liu Dongfeng

Brief Biography: Liu Dongfeng is a professor and doctoral supervisor at Shanghai University of Sport, and currently serves as the Dean of the Graduate School. His research focuses primarily on sports management systems and the impact of sports events on urban development. In recent years, he has led more than 10 provincial and ministerial-level research projects, published over 100 academic papers (including 20 SSCI papers), authored two English-language academic books, and received the 7th National Higher Education Humanities and Social Sciences Outstanding Achievement Award from the Ministry of Education in 2015.

Weblink: https://sem.sus.edu.cn/info/1145/4904.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Michael Butterworth

Brief Biography: Michael L. Butterworth is a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, director of the Center for Sports Communication and Media, and the Governor Ann W. Richards Chair in the Texas Program in Sports and Media. He received his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Public Culture from Indiana University in 2006. His research focuses on the intersections of rhetoric, democracy, and sports, particularly in the context of national identity, militarism, and public memory. He is the author of *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity during the War on Terror* and has published articles in journals such as *Communication and Sport* and *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*. He also serves as the chair of the ICA Interest Group in Sport Communication.

Weblink: <https://moody.utexas.edu/faculty/michael-butterworth>

Courtney M. Cox

Brief Biography: Courtney M. Cox is an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois' College of Media. She examines social issues such as representation, technology, globalization, and labor through the lens of sports. With prior experience as a sports reporter at ESPN and NPR affiliate KPCC, Cox brings significant media expertise to her role. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin and a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Southern California. Currently, she teaches the course "Sportmedia Technology and Culture" and is engaged in several research projects, including the book project "Double Crossover: Gender, Media, and Politics in Basketball," which explores the experiences of Black women athletes in the WNBA, and a project on advanced analytics in sports. She aims to offer new perspectives on social issues through her teaching and research.

Weblink: <https://media.illinois.edu/new-professor-cox-examines-social-issues-through-sport/>

6	<p>List the hashtags on international social media platforms you are following.</p> <p>Hashtags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> #VulnerableChildren #SportForDevelopment #YouthDevelopment #Orphans #YouthBaseball #ChildWelfare #SocialMobility #MediaNarratives #CriticalMedia #YouthEmpowerment
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the websites you have/will read to support this project. We do not mean web articles, we mean actual websites that you will refer to and check in with. For example if you are doing an environmental story you might regularly check <i>China Dialogue</i>. If you are doing Mojo you might like and join the https://www.facebook.com/groups/mojocon/ Facebook group. • Put your <i>top 5 websites links</i> here and include a brief literature review paragraph for each website. <p>Facebook Community - The International Platform on Sport and Development</p> <p>Literature Review: The leading hub for sharing knowledge, building good practice and fostering partnerships between stakeholders in the field of sport for development. Operated by the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA). More than 25000 followers shared phone calls, assessment toolkits, and field diaries funded by the Global Sports for Development project, daily posting real-time cases and anti frameworks about gender inclusive baseball camps in Uganda, condemning "hero myth marketing," and explanations about sports empowerment and exclusionary outcomes.</p> <p>Weblink: https://www.facebook.com/sportanddev</p> <p>LinkedIn Group - International Sport for Development and Peace Association (ISDPA)</p> <p>Literature Review: A network of 1200 scholars and non-governmental organization managers exchange CFP, datasets, and peer-reviewed preprints on social mobility in the field of sports. Their clues on how to transform "sports capital" into the labor market and debates on failed projects are directly mapped onto the Bourdieu capital transformation lens in your research.</p> <p>Weblink: https://www.linkedin.com/company/isdpa</p> <p>Reddit Forum - r/Baseball (China sub-threads)</p> <p>Literature Review: With 2 million subscribers, r/Baseball is the largest open forum for global diamond talk; China-focused threads track youth-league expansion in Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang and regularly crowd-source media links about Xujiadai-style "baseball villages."</p> <p>Weblink: https://www.reddit.com/r/baseball/—sample China thread: https://www.reddit.com/r/baseball/comments/1az3uh9/popularity_of_baseball_in_mainlan</p>

d_china/

Discord Channel - /r/Journalism Official Server (Sports & Storytelling rooms)

Literature Review: This live streaming server was stripped away by Redditer/Journalism moderators to host sports writing, framework ethics, and data visual narrative channels. The story perspective of the journalist seminar - "How can we show children who haven't won games?" - provides a qualitative understanding of the norms of the news editing room, which continue or undermine the hero narrative of a single story.

Weblink: <https://disboard.org/zh-cn/servers/tag/journalism>

LinkedIn Page/Forum - UNESCO Chair: Sport for Development, Peace & Environment (SDPE-MGP)

Literature Review: This academic policy center streams webinars, open access papers, and evidence seeking posts on sports advocacy that aligns with sustainable development goals. It has an interdisciplinary perspective (gender equality, peace building, environmental justice), expands your focus on mobility beyond economics, and highlights alternative framework equipment, which helps to add more narrative color to documentaries.

Weblink: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/unesco-chair-sport-for-development-peace-and-environment>

Academic resources list & Interview

1

- List the *academic books* (and web links) you have/will read to support this project.
- Give a brief one or two sentence literature review to accompany each book.

Empowering Youth Athletes Against the Odds:

Talent Development in American Underserved Communities

literature review: This study shows that "sports are empowerment" is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it brings real opportunities, support, recognition, and feasible solutions to impoverished youth, which is undoubtedly a liberating force. On the other hand, it uses an intangible grid of norms, values, and success standards to quietly shape and supervise their bodies, thoughts, and behaviors, integrating them into the existing social order rather than inviting them to challenge it. Therefore, empowerment is never neutral. It silently consolidates the power structure and social inequality that it claims to soften. Future sports for development initiatives must face this paradox, advocate critical thinking, structural awareness, and community based practices, rather than using sports as a tool for personal redemption.

Weblink: https://findresearcher.sdu.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/199630070/For_Submission_Thesis.pdf

Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices

literature review: Hall's discourse on cultural representation illustrates how media is shaped by power and ideology, which in turn affects the content and form of stories. Hall believes that images and narratives have no fixed meaning, and audiences from different cultural backgrounds will interpret images differently based on their own experiences. This is very beneficial for studying sports empowerment stories to convey hope to certain audiences and alienation to others. The media can critically question whether these images are just reproducing mainstream views.

Weblink: <https://go.exlibris.link/Z6qxnK9z>

2

- List any *academic articles, research or reports* (and web links) you have/will read to support this project.
- Put your top 5 here and include a brief literature review paragraph for each one.

Sport, Social Mobility and Elite Athletes

literature review: The chapter written by Ramon Spaaij and Suzanne Schrijnder explores the relationship between sports and social mobility, with a special focus on elite female road cyclists. By reviewing relevant literature and empirical studies, the authors analyze the social mobility mechanisms in sports and point out that while sports may offer opportunities for upward mobility, these opportunities are not evenly distributed. Factors such as gender, race, and class significantly influence an individual's ability to achieve social mobility through sports. In addition, the authors discuss various theoretical and methodological approaches to sports and social mobility, and suggest directions for future research.

Weblink: <https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/SpaaijSchrijnder2022SportSocialMobilityandEliteAthletes.pdf>

Sport, Social Class, and Cultural Capital: Building on Bourdieu and His Critics

literature review: In this literature, Carl Stempel applied Pierre Bourdieu's cultural capital theory to analyze adult sports participation, summarized Bourdieu's key views on sports and social class, and explored the interplay of social class and cultural capital in sports. It compared U.S. sports participation patterns from 1965 to 1975 with Bourdieu's analysis of France, and investigated amendments to Bourdieu's theory, such as the omnivore theory and Miche'le Lamont's comparative analyses. Future research should combine Bourdieu's theory and methods, consider his critics, and connect to other relevant studies.

Weblink: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328438856_Sport_Social_Class_and_Cultural_Capital_Building_on_Bourdieu_and_His_Critics

More Than a Game: Sports Media Framing Effects on Attitudes, Intentions, and Enjoyment

literature review: This literature explores how sports media framing impacts audience attitudes, behavioral intentions, and enjoyment. Research reveals that sports news now increasingly intersects with celebrity and pop culture. Findings show audiences respond more positively to stories emphasizing athletes' personal traits (character frames) than purely in-game performance (performance frames). Also, mentioning athletes' religious beliefs in character - focused stories significantly enhances sports fans' intention to support the athletes and their enjoyment of the stories, with no such effect seen in non - sports fans. Sports fans also show significant differences in assessing athletes with religious information, indicating their identity may influence athlete evaluations. These insights are highly applicable for sports media content creators, suggesting they highlight athletes' personal traits, especially when targeting sports fans.

Weblink: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270671608_More_Than_a_Game_Sports_Media_Framing_Effects_on_Attitudes_Intentions_and_Enjoyment

New Media, Professional Sport and Political Economy

literature review: New media technologies are seen to be changing the production, delivery and consumption of professional sports and creating a new dynamic between sports fans, athletes, clubs, governing bodies and the mainstream media. However, as Bellamy and McChesney (2011) have pointed out, advances in digital technologies are taking place within social, political, and economic contexts that are strongly conditioning the course and shape of this communication revolution. This essay assesses the first wave of research on professional sport and new media technologies and concludes that early trends indicate the continuation of existing neoliberal capitalist tendencies within professional sport. Using the

concept of political economy, the essay explores issues of ownership, structure, production and delivery of sport. Discussion focuses on the opportunities sports fans now have available to them and how sports organization and media corporations shifted from an initial position of uncertainty, that bordered on hostility, to one which has seen them embrace new media technologies as powerful marketing tools. The essay concludes by stating as fundamental the issues of ownership and control and advocates that greater cognizance be accorded to underlying economic structures and the enduring, all-pervasive power of neoliberal capitalism and its impact in professional sport.

Weblink: <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.bolton.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1177/0193723512467356>

White Paper CHILD LABOUR IN SPORT Protecting the Rights of Child Athletes

literature review: The white paper examines the working conditions of children in elite sports, highlighting their resemblance to child labour and associated risks to health, welfare, and education. Based on literature reviews and expert consultations, it presents 17 recommendations. These aim to regulate children's participation in sports via a child-rights approach, emphasizing the need to recognize certain aspects of child athletes' work as analogous to child labour. It advocates for child rights to guide all decisions and calls on sports bodies and states to implement appropriate age and training hour regulations. The goal is to foster a healthier, more balanced, and sustainable sports development system centered on children.

Weblink: <https://www.sporhumanrights.org/media/thph1xuc/white-paper-june-2022.pdf>

3	<p>List the interviews you have conducted/will conduct for this project and list <i>the main objectives and interviewee</i> of each interview.</p> <p>Protagonist: Qin Yujie Interviewee: Qin Yujie ("Little Dragons" U10 team member) Main Objectives: Personal Journey: (Sensitively, respecting privacy and ethics) Explore his background. How did he come to Lindai? What are his memories of the welfare institute? His feelings upon arriving in Lindai and encountering baseball? Life in Lindai: Contrast his current life with his past. What does he like and dislike? Who are his friends? What is his daily routine during the training camp? Relationship with Baseball: Beyond the immediate stakes, what does the sport mean to him personally? Does he enjoy it? What position does he play? His strengths and weaknesses? His dreams related to baseball? Relationship with Coach Li: Explore his connection with head coach Li Xuecheng. How does he view the coach? What is their interaction like? Awareness of Stakes: To what extent is he aware of the pressure surrounding the August championship? How does he feel about the prospect of potentially returning to the welfare institute? Explore his hopes, fears, and anxieties related to the competition (handle with extreme care). Team Integration: How well is he integrated into the team? Does he feel supported? Describe his relationships with teammates.</p> <p>Mentor & Driver: Li Wei Interviewee: Li Wei (Head Coach, "Little Dragons" baseball team) Main Objectives: Coaching Philosophy: Elaborate on his training methods. Beyond winning, what are his development goals for the players? How does he handle the pressure on young athletes? Qin Yujie's Story: Explain the specifics of bringing Qin Yujie from the Ulanqab City Children's Welfare Institute. What motivated him? What potential did he see? What is his relationship with the institute? What are his hopes and concerns for Qin Yujie's prospects in the championship? Team Assessment: Discuss the current U10 team's strengths and weaknesses. How does it compare to previous championship teams? As defending champions, what specific challenges do they face this year? Role of Baseball: His views on how baseball impacts children's lives, especially those from difficult backgrounds. The significance of the Xujiadai project. Personal Background: Briefly understand his own baseball experience.</p> <p>The Team & Peers Interviewees: Select U10 team members Main Objectives: Team Life: Describe the experience of the training camp. What's it like being on the "Little Dragons" team? Best and hardest parts? Competition & Pressure: How do they feel about the upcoming championship? Do they feel the pressure of being defending champions? Who do they see as main rivals? Relationship with Qin Yujie: How do they perceive Qin Yujie? Is he well-integrated? Are they aware of his situation? How do they support each other? Meaning of Baseball: What does playing baseball mean to them? What have they learned? What friendships have they built?</p>
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List any other resources you intend to use for the project.

National Bureau of Statistics of China

Purpose: Obtain macro-level data on rural demographics, education investment, and sports facility coverage.

Link: www.stats.gov.cn

CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure)

Purpose: SLargest Chinese academic portal. Search for Chinese-language academic papers and policy analyses .

Link: <https://www.cnki.net/index/>

Reuters Sports News Archive

Purpose: Continuous feed and searchable archive let me scrape framing language around “China baseball miracle” stories for discourse analysis.

Link: https://www.reuters.com/sports/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Pew Research Center – Sports Media & Social-Media Fact Sheets

Purpose: Supplies survey data on how U.S. audiences consume sports content and how that shapes attitudes—comparative baseline for my reception study.

Link: https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/social-media-and-news-fact-sheet/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

UNESCO “Values Education through Sport” portal

Purpose: Provides curriculum guides on embedding inclusion and resilience in sport programmes—useful benchmarks for evaluating Qin Yujie’s schooling component.

Link: https://www.unesco.org/en/sport-and-anti-doping/sports-values-education?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Wikipedia Baseball in China

Purpose: Learn about the development of baseball in China and the information on Chinese baseball leagues.

Link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baseball_in_China

When filling out the section above also consider - if any media work already been produced on this subject? - If so, what is new, different, interesting, engaging, insightful about your approach?

Research Questions

Your story / project will be guided by a series of questions that break your story / topic down into its components. These questions investigate the different angles or dimensions of your topic. You are likely to devise the following questions that go from the broad context of your topic to something more detailed. (These questions help to establish the focus and main angles of your story).

1. What is the specific fact or case to be studied (5W1H) ?

The story revolves around Qin Yujie, a young baseball player and an orphan, training with the “Little Dragons Baseball Team at the Lindai Central Primary School, China. He was brought to the school in Xujiadai Village of Zhejiang Province, by head coach Li Wei from the Ulanqab Children's Welfare Institute in Inner Mongolia.

The Xujiadai Village, also known as the "the First Baseball Village in China." and the school has been training rigorously and organizes a residential closed training program every year, during the July summer vacation. Their goal is to prepare for the National Youth Baseball Championship, scheduled to take place in the village in August. As the defending champions of the Under-10 category, this year's new team will face fresh challenges.

Qin Yujie, who came to Lindai Central Primary School in 2020 has a chance to build his career in baseball if he continues to excel. If he stops playing, he will have to return to the welfare institute. Therefore, the August competition is crucial for Qin Yujie, as his performance will determine whether he can continue to stay on the team.

2. What is the background and context of the facts?

China has established a comprehensive support system for children in distress, with the Law on the Protection of Minors at its core, covering aspects such as livelihood, education, healthcare, rehabilitation, and guardianship. The current policy philosophy is undergoing a profound shift from providing basic necessities through "singular assistance" to promoting holistic development through "capacity-building and empowerment."

Despite clear policy objectives, the traditional centralized institutional care model faces inherent limitations in individual potential exploration and career path planning. These constraints make it difficult to fully meet the diverse and personalized developmental needs of children in distress, posing challenges to their long-term social integration and future development.

Sports (particularly team sports) are empirically recognized as an effective means to cultivate discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence in adolescents, thereby facilitating their social integration. Its universal nature, which transcends social backgrounds, offers an innovative and effective pathway for the "capacity-building and empowerment" of children in distress.

This study examines the case of Qin Yujie, an orphan whose story of seeking to change his fate through baseball serves as a microcosm of the aforementioned context. The case starkly reveals a core tension within the "empowerment" process: while providing opportunities, the model that tightly binds continued participation to competitive performance also places immense psychological and physical pressure and uncertainty on children without family support. Through this authentic case study, this research aims to critically examine the pain points of empowerment practices, offering insights for promoting the development of a more scientific and humane support system..

3. What is the central question of the proposed research?

The central question of the story subject

- This study critically examines the dual nature of sports empowerment for disadvantaged children, exploring how sports programs can both pave the way for hope and potentially reinforce alienated structures. How does the sports empowerment model, particularly in the context of institutionalized care, both liberate and constrain the development of marginalized children?

The central question of the media value research

- The Obscuration and Simplification of Complex Realities in Singular Sports Inspiration Narratives.

4. What are the research topics related to this research question?

sub-questions of the central question of the story subject

- How does sports participation reshape the self-identity and agency of children in distress?
- In what ways might the pressure to "succeed through sports" lead to internalized instrumentalization?.

- Does the "sports empowerment" model inadvertently reinforce a conditional logic of "value through achievement"?
- What additional support mechanisms, beyond athletic opportunities, ought to be established by society?
- What lessons can be drawn from international cases for reforming China's welfare-sports nexus?

sub-questions of the media value research

- How do media narratives represent the duality of "hope" and "alienation" in sports empowerment?
- How do inspirational narratives trigger public empathy, while potentially oversimplifying structural complexities?
- Do media maintain a critical stance when portraying sports empowerment? How do they balance truth-telling and intervention?
- How do local stories resonate globally through universal themes? How do cultural differences shape interpretation?
- How do such narratives shape public perception, policy discourse, and resource allocation?

5. What are the aims and objectives of the research?

Aim:

- This study aims to critically analyze the sports inspiration narrative through the case study of the documentary, unveiling the complexities and ethical tensions inherent in media representations of "sports empowerment for children in distress." It further seeks to explore how responsible media practices can move beyond simplistic celebrations of individual success toward stimulating public discourse on structural inequalities and systemic solutions, ultimately contributing to the development of fairer and more human-centered empowerment models for vulnerable children.

Objectives related to the central question of the story subject

- To reveal the duality of sports empowerment: Analyze how sports programs simultaneously offer hope for marginalized children to change their destinies, while potentially leading to new forms of alienation due to performance pressure and instrumentalization.
- To critique systemic structural contradictions: Examine the inherent conflict between instrumental rationality (producing champions) and value rationality (fostering well-rounded individuals) in current sports empowerment models, and its impact on child development.

- To propose more equitable empowerment pathways: Explore alternatives to the binary logic of "stay only if you succeed," and advocate for building supportive systems centered on children's long-term well-being .

Objectives related to the central question of media value

- To deconstruct media narrative ethics: Analyze how media shapes "sports inspiration narratives" through selective representation (e.g., highlighting success, simplifying struggles), and critique its potential to obscure structural inequalities.
- To assess the social impact of narratives: Investigate how such narratives influence public perception, policy agendas, and resource allocation, and reflect on whether they reinforce the bias that "success depends solely on individual effort."
- To construct a responsible narrative framework: Provide ethical guidelines for media practitioners to advocate for reporting that respects the authenticity of individual stories while exposing systemic issues, shifting media from "emotional consumption" to "social empowerment."

6. What research methods will be chosen and what do they address?

The project adopts a qualitative research design, supported by methodological triangulation. It integrates case study analysis, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and content analysis of media materials.

In-depth Interviews (Qualitative) : To capture the subjective experiences, motivations, and conflicts of coaches, the children themselves (e.g., Qin Yujie), teammates, and family members (where feasible), enabling a deep exploration of the meanings behind individual stories.

Participant Observation (Qualitative) : To immerse in training grounds, dormitories, and competition venues, documenting power dynamics, bodily practices, and emotional expressions (e.g., cheering, silence, tears), revealing the everyday micro-politics within the "empowerment" process.

Case Study (Qualitative) : Deeply explore the dual nature of sports as a social mobility tool within a specific context. Conduct in-depth investigations into the experiences of specific groups of athletes or sports events.

Content Analysis (Qualitative) : To decode narrative structures and framing strategies in media texts (e.g., documentaries, films) that construct "single inspirational sports stories."

Comparative Analysis (Triangulation) : To enhance the reliability and validity of the research by cross-verifying data from interviews, observations, texts, and quantitative sources, avoiding biases inherent to single-method approaches.

7. What media theory does this issue involve?

Framing Theory – key scholars: Erving Goffman (1974), Todd Gitlin (1980), Robert Entman (1993)

Central Ideas of the Theory

- The media do not simply mirror reality; they shape it by selecting, highlighting, and organizing facts through “frames,” thereby steering how audiences perceive and interpret events.
- A frame is a filter of meaning: by deciding what is covered, what is emphasized, and what is omitted, the media set the hierarchy of issues and influence how causality, morality, and remedies are understood.
- Audiences usually process information within pre-set media frames and therefore overlook excluded viewpoints; a single, repeatedly invoked frame tends to create stereotypes and distort public agendas.

Framing theory supplies a “select–emphasize–omit–explain” toolkit that systematically dissects project. Analyze the formation of a single motivational framework and examine whether documentaries break through this framework.

8. What relevant research fields and theories are used to explain it?

The most directly applicable theory is from the field of sociology: Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice. Its core concepts—“Field,” “Capital,” and “Habitus”—are used to reveal the dialectical relationship between social structure and individual action.

Bourdieu greatly expanded the notion of capital, understanding it as the broad resources on which actors rely to survive and compete within a social field. The total volume and composition of capital determine one’s position, power, and chances of success. He distinguishes several key forms:

Economic capital: material wealth such as money and property.

Social capital: networks of relationships and connections that provide support and access to resources.

Cultural capital: cultural knowledge, educational background, skills, and tastes, which are socially recognized and convertible into other advantages.

The field is defined as a social space with specific rules, hierarchies, and forms of competition, while habitus refers to the dispositions, behaviors, and worldviews formed through socialization.

In short, Bourdieu's theory explains that Qin's trajectory is not simply a story of individual effort, but the outcome of the interaction between his inherited capital and habitus and the unequal rules of the sporting field he entered.

9. Why is this research important and what are its implications?

- **Challenging Mainstream Narratives and Enriching Critical Theory:**

The research presents a critical challenge to the dominant narrative that "sports inevitably empower," revealing the potential phenomenon of "Empowerment Alienation" behind it. It offers a new critical perspective for the fields of sports sociology, social work, and childhood studies.

- **Providing a Mirror and Reference for Policymakers:**

The findings prompt governments and welfare institutions to reevaluate performance-oriented social intervention programs. It calls on policymakers to shift from "result-based supremacy" to "balancing process and human development," advocating for the construction of support systems that prioritize long-term well-being, psychological safety, and non-competitive pathways.

- **Offering Ethical Guidelines for Practitioners:**

It provides crucial ethical reflections for coaches, social workers, teachers, and institutional administrators who directly serve children in distress. The study warns practitioners to remain vigilant against instrumentalizing children as capital for achieving results under the guise of "acting in their best interests," emphasizing the central role of "ethics of care" in practice.

- **Enhancing Critical Awareness Among Media and the Public:**

By deconstructing the "singular inspirational narrative," it empowers media professionals and the public to identify and critique stories that oversimplify complex social issues. It encourages media to engage in more responsible and in-depth reporting, while also inspiring the public to inquire into the systemic reasons behind success stories, thereby fostering more mature public discourse.

- **Giving a Genuine Platform to Children in Distress:**

Most importantly, this research refuses to treat children in distress as passive recipients of aid. Instead, by deeply portraying their struggles, pressures, and agency, it restores them as flesh-and-blood individuals with complex emotions. This in itself is an act of respect and empowerment.

10. How are the proposed conclusions different from previous ones?

This study fundamentally differs from most previous research that focused on the positive effects of "sports empowerment." Its core shift moves from "celebration" to "critical examination," and from "focusing on success stories" to "revealing systemic risks." The specific differences are reflected in the following aspects:

- **Divergent Interpretations of the Essence of "Sports Empowerment"**

Previous research: Typically viewed "empowerment" as a purely linear process of gain (e.g., boosting confidence, acquiring skills).

This study: Reveals that "empowerment" is a contradictory entity full of tension. While it offers hope, it may also become a new form of control through the conditional logic of "stay only if you perform well" (i.e., "empowerment alienation").

- **Different Definitions of "Success"**

Previous research: Primarily defined success based on competition results and whether one remains within the system.

This study: Challenges this narrow view of success. It argues that even if the team wins a championship, the process may still be a "failure" for a child who feels instrumentalized and lives in constant fear of returning to the welfare institution. True success should include psychological safety, a sense of dignity, and diverse development pathways.

- **Different Reflections on the Role of Media**

Previous research: Mostly affirmed the positive promotional role of media's inspirational narratives.

This study: Critiques the media's "singular inspirational narrative," pointing out that by focusing on "success stories," it obscures the fate of the majority who remain "silent," inadvertently glorifying a potentially flawed system and diverting public attention from structural reform.

- **Different Recommendations for Intervention Measures**

Previous research: Suggestions often remained at the technical level (e.g., improving training methods, increasing funding).

This study: Recommendations target ethical and systemic levels: It emphasizes the necessity of establishing an unconditional support system (e.g., psychological counseling, educational security) to decouple children's value from competition results, fundamentally reshaping the concept and practice of "empowerment."

11. What is the title of the research proposal?

Main Title: **Sports Empowerment from a Critical Perspective**

Subtitle: **On the Media's Symbolic Representation and Power Construction of Children in Distress**

Research Abstract (25-50 words)

This is an edited of the proposal into a thumbnail summary. This will not contain references.

This study critically examines how sports empowerment programs for impoverished children in China cultivate hope and alienation. Through qualitative triangulation, it shows that conditional inclusion can lead to "alienation of hope," and media simplification obscures structural issues. It advocates humanistic approaches and critical media narratives.

Research Proposal (1500 words)

The research proposal is the most detailed statement of the ideas or issues you are investigating. It will show how you answer the research questions you have devised, and use the various sources you have identified to demonstrate your understanding of the topic you are investigating. It will be structured with an introduction/overview followed by a detailed analysis of the context and dimensions of your topic. As with an essay, it will be properly referenced (those references are not part of the word count).

Sports Empowerment from a Critical Perspective

: On the Media's Symbolic Representation and Power Construction of Children in Distress

I. Introduction

This study examines sports empowerment and the alienation of hope among marginalized youth in China, alongside analyzing the construction and dissemination of inspirational sports narratives in media. It investigates the dual nature of sports—as both a potential opportunity and a source of inequality—and critiques the simplified, hero-driven stories often

promoted by media. Using a qualitative approach, the research employs case study methods, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and media content analysis. Its significance lies in uncovering the complexities of sports empowerment and the ideological role of media narratives, thereby contributing to critical discussions on equity in sports.

II. Background and Significance

The specific case examined is the "Little Dragon" baseball team in Xujiadai Village, Zhejiang Province. The situation of players such as Qin Yujie, a youth from the Ulanqab Children's Welfare Institute in Inner Mongolia, is especially poignant. Baseball represents a form of sports empowerment, yet also carries the risk of what this study conceptualizes as the alienation of hope—where the very opportunity meant to liberate a child becomes a conditional and potentially oppressive structure. Its future is still closely related to athletic performance, reflecting the instability of inclusivity

Moreover, it also involves how the media creates a "single inspiring story" and narrates it around this story. Although such stories strengthen the positive image of sports empowerment, they often conceal deeper tension and systemic problems in sports projects. Different theoretical perspectives and investigation methods are used to deepen the understanding of the paradoxical nature of sports intervention. During the research period, there is indeed evidence that the media framework is not completely neutral and has ideological effects. After analyzing the effects of sports empowerment and alienation, how this narrative is formed, and the existence of "media blind spots", this work brings some ideas to policies that hope to use sports to achieve educational and social justice goals.

This study only focuses on rural baseball in China, and the research subjects are marginalized teenagers and children in some welfare institutions. One case cannot represent everything, but careful research combined with theory driven analysis allows us to better understand these complex steps and processes.

Key concepts for this study include :

- Conditional Inclusion: Acceptance contingent on meeting specific conditions, with ongoing risk of re-marginalization.
- Alienation of Hope: The process through Opportunities intended to empower become sources of control and anxiety.
- Media Blind Spots: Structural issues or complexities underrepresented in media narratives.
- Sports Empowerment: The use of athletic programs to promote personal and social development, and its potential contradictions.

- Framing Theory: How media shapes public perception through selection, emphasis, and organization of facts.

III. Literature Review

Introduction

I have developed a theoretical framework to critically explore the sports empowerment projects for marginalized children in China, aiming to understand how to create both hope and alienation. Using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habituation, I analyze structural inequality and rely on Hall's representational theory to deconstruct the formation of media myths. From theoretical foundations to practical research on the potential and pitfalls of sports, I finally integrate those contradictory results. This analysis refers to nearly thirty years of peer-reviewed sociological, media, and sports development literature, both in English and Chinese, but without non academic reports or anecdotal sources, in order to maintain academic rigor and highlight key points.

Main Section

Bourdieu's sociological theory provided necessary analytical tools for a deeper understanding of Qin's situation. Bourdieu and WacQuant (1992) proposed some important concepts, such as "field," "capital," and "habit," to explore how social structure affects human agency and destiny. Capital has three convertible forms: economic capital, which refers to material wealth such as currency and property, social capital is the network and relationships that provide support and resources, and cultural capital includes knowledge, education, skills, and other knowledge that give society advantages.

The case of Qin Yujie highlights the decisive role of "capital" in personal opportunities. As an orphan, he faced a significant "capital deficit" even before entering the sports field. His background meant he lacked the family-based economic, social, and cultural capital that Pan, Liping. (2018) research identifies as directly influencing children's educational and developmental paths. For instance, a family with substantial economic capital can afford various extracurricular activities and professional training for their children, giving them a competitive edge. Qin Yujie's baseball career is his platform to acquire and convert "athletic capital," but his starting point means he must shoulder immense risks alone.

Next are the concepts of "field" and "habitus." Bourdieu defines a "field" as a social space with specific rules, competition, and hierarchies. In the sports field, individuals accumulate and compete for different forms of capital to gain status and power. "Habitus," on the other hand, is a system of internalized dispositions, including behaviors, postures, values, and worldviews, that is largely unconscious. For Qin Yujie, his "habitus" likely stems from his experiences in the welfare institute, which may differ significantly from the competitive culture of his middle-class peers with parental support. Without "family capital" to fall back on, he must navigate the implicit rules of this field on his own, which severely exacerbates his psychological stress and uncertainty.

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of Qin Yujie's story. According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is not a simple reflection of reality but a process of "producing" meaning through language and symbolic systems. An event has no single, fixed meaning; its significance is constructed within a specific cultural and linguistic framework. Media, through selective information and specific "discourses," organizes and transmits stories, often using "myths" to normalize certain narratives, such as "sport changes destiny," making them appear as self-evident truths. This narrative strategy constructs a "hero myth" by highlighting individual achievement, thereby diverting public attention from the systemic factors that led to his predicament. This selective storytelling constitutes a form of "symbolic violence," where the oppressed unconsciously accept and reproduce the very social structures that dominate them, thus obscuring deeper issues of social inequality and unequal resource distribution.

The positive potential of sports empowerment lies in its ability to offer a path of social mobility for disadvantaged youth and promote their Positive Youth Development (PYD). Spaaij, R. (2011), research indicates that sport can help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds accumulate and convert social, cultural, and economic capital, leading to better educational and career opportunities. However, Spaaij also stresses that professional athletic careers are rare and fraught with uncertainty.

Holt, N.L. (2016), Nicholas Holt's research further notes that sports participation itself does not automatically lead to positive development; the key is how the sports program is "structured and delivered". A well-structured sports environment can foster important life skills like cooperation, discipline, and self-control while providing crucial psychosocial support. However, when sports are overly instrumentalized, they can have significant negative effects. Book Jr, R (2022), Robert Book Jr.'s research emphasizes that athletes from disadvantaged backgrounds succeed "in spite of trauma, not because of it". It is dangerous and irresponsible to conflate adversity with severe childhood trauma. Childhood trauma can cause lasting psychological vulnerability, which necessitates professional psychosocial support. While providing challenges is necessary, intentionally creating or glorifying trauma as a catalyst for success is unethical.

Research Methods

Researchers have employed methods like content analysis, network analysis, surveys, case studies, and ethnography to examine these issues, each providing different insights. Quantitative approaches reveal broad patterns but may miss personal complexities, while qualitative approaches offer depth but limited generalizability. Combining methods is often recommended for a fuller understanding.

Conclusion

Overall, these literature indicate that the sports empowerment model has both a hopeful "liberator" and a strict "disciplined" approach for children in distress. When empowerment is associated with athletic performance and instrumental rationality, this positive possibility may become a new form of oppression. Media narratives also play a very important role, simplifying the reality and highlighting the inspiring mythological struggles created by individuals, while hiding the systemic situation of structural inequality and social difficulties.

This narrative may trigger strong emotional reactions from the general public, but may hinder people from engaging in deeper social criticism to solve the problems involved.

IV. Research Design and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case study method to conduct a detailed analysis of a rural youth baseball project, mainly analyzing its dual effects in sports empowerment and hope alienation. Multiple methods are utilized to capture diverse perspectives:

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with marginalized youth athletes, coaches. These will explore lived experiences, perceptions of sports as opportunity or constraint, enabling a deep exploration of the meanings behind individual stories.

Participant Observation: To immerse in training grounds, dormitories, and competition venues, documenting power dynamics, bodily practices, and emotional expressions, revealing the everyday micro-politics within the "empowerment" process.

Media Analysis: Collected media content (news reports, television features, online videos) related to the team or comparable cases will be analyzed to identify narrative framing, portrayals of youth, and thematic emphases or omissions—particularly regarding empowerment and alienation.

Document Review: Institutional and policy documents (e.g., team records, government guidelines) will be examined to contextualize the program within broader structural conditions.

All data will be analyzed qualitatively using inductive coding to identify emergent themes. Triangulation across interviews, observations, media content, and documents will enhance the credibility and depth of the analysis. Researcher reflexivity will be maintained throughout to acknowledge and address potential influences on interpretation.

Challenges such as establishing trust with marginalized youth will be mitigated through collaboration with local intermediaries and culturally sensitive engagement. Media biases will be countered by cross-verification with field data. While the case study design limits broad generalizability, it provides significant depth and context-rich insight, with findings clearly situated within their specific framework.

V. Preliminary Hypotheses and Implications

Duality of Sports Empowerment: While sports may provide marginalized youth with temporary empowerment through skill development and recognition, this inclusion remains highly conditional. The threat of "alienation of hope" emerges when their worth becomes exclusively tied to athletic performance, leaving them vulnerable to re-marginalization once support or success diminishes.

Simplified Media Narratives: Media coverage is likely to emphasize uplifting but simplistic stories of individual triumph, thereby obscuring deeper structural constraints and the phenomenon of hope alienation. Such narratives create “media blind spots” that neglect the conditional and often precarious nature of sports empowerment.

Theoretical and Practical Implications: This study aims to advance theoretical frameworks around conditional inclusion and the alienation of hope within sports sociology and media studies. Practically, it encourages the design of more unconditional support mechanisms in sports programs and calls for more nuanced, structurally aware media representations.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study illuminates the paradoxical nature of sports empowerment, revealing both its potential to offer hope and its tendency to produce alienation among marginalized youth. It further critiques the role of media in constructing simplified narratives that mask these complex realities. The findings will advance critical scholarship on the conditional dynamics of inclusion in sports and contribute to the design of more supportive policies and ethically nuanced media practices.

VII. Citations

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Work-log & Reflective Journal

To be conducted throughout planning, reporting & editing stages.

A work-log and reflective journal, is a common requirement in UK university assessments. It helps students to effectively analyse their own progress and apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. Supporting your journey to be effective, ethical, independent practitioners.

A Reflective Log is the perfect way to encourage this approach alongside with reflective reports. It is essentially a log or diary that contains regular entries by the student, detailing their experiences and emotions with regard to their learning process. It also includes references to relevant theories to connect the student's academic knowledge with their practical work. The log can be used to verify a student's intellectual engagement with the course material or practical assignments, as well as their independent work outside of lectures and seminars.

Write a daily factual account of what you did and learnt on a day-by-day basis - alongside reflections that cover your experiences, thoughts, feelings, success', failures and what you learned from the experiences on the day with regard to your learning process. You may wish to include a diary of the days spent travelling and acclimatising to the area you shot in however the only requirement is that you diary your 'on the ground' field reporting days. You are expected to spend 7-10 x 8-hour days or a minimum of 55 hours 'in the field' that means, filming, meeting subjects, taking pictures, doing interviews. You will need to log and evidence your hours.

Guidance:

- <https://www.ivoryresearch.com/reflective-log-reflective-diary/>
- <http://www.deakin.edu.au/students/studying/study-support/academic-skills/reflective-writing>

Work-log & Reflections:

This document serves as a comprehensive work-log and reflective journal, detailing the progress, experiences, and learning throughout the planning, reporting, and editing stages of

my project on the Little Dragon Baseball Team. It includes factual accounts of daily activities, alongside reflections on my thoughts, feelings, successes, and failures.

Day 1: March 25, 2025

- **Work-log:** Pre-communication and coordination with relevant parties, including the Little Dragon Baseball Team, schools, and coaches, to secure filming permits.
- **Reflection:** Today marked the official start of the project. The primary challenge was navigating the bureaucratic aspects of gaining permission. The success of securing the permits was a huge relief and a valuable lesson in proactive communication and professional courtesy. It affirmed the importance of establishing a respectful and collaborative relationship with subjects from the very beginning.

Day 2: April 5, 2025

- **Work-log:** Conducted preliminary research at the Little Dragon Baseball Team and Lin Dai Central Primary School to identify key characters, themes, and storylines. Simultaneously, I captured footage of the team's daily training sessions.
- **Reflection:** My initial visit was eye-opening. The boys' energy was infectious, and it was easy to get swept up in the moment. However, I learned the importance of focusing my lens with a clear purpose. It's not just about capturing everything; it's about identifying the core narrative threads. This experience reinforced the theoretical concept of narrative structure and the need to seek out compelling characters and conflicts from the outset.

Day 3-5: April 29 - May 2, 2025

- **Work-log:** Data collection and organization. I collected and analyzed relevant domestic and international literature to establish a theoretical foundation for the project. I also watched various films to find shooting inspiration.
- **Reflection:** This was a period of intellectual deep-diving. I initially found it challenging to connect the academic theories of documentary filmmaking to my practical work. However, by watching films and reading critical analyses, I started to see how concepts like observational cinema or narrative arcs are not just abstract ideas but practical tools. This stage felt less like "work" and more like an intellectual puzzle, and I felt a sense of achievement when I could pinpoint a specific theory in a film and consider how to apply it.

Day 6-7: May 3-4, 2025

- **Work-log:** Data collection and organization for writing the Critical Analysis and Reflection Project Form and production briefs.
- **Reflection:** The theoretical groundwork paid off today. Writing the briefs was a process of turning my research into a concrete plan. It was a good exercise in self-discipline and helped me articulate my vision clearly. I felt more confident in my project's direction, having a structured plan to follow. This process made me realize that a well-defined brief is crucial for staying on track, especially when faced with the unpredictability of field reporting.

Day 8-9: May 29-30, 2025

- **Work-log:** Equipment preparation and debugging, followed by detailed shooting plan formulation, including interview outlines and scripts.
- **Reflection:** Technical challenges are inevitable. To address potential issues that may arise during filming, particularly during the shooting of the National Baseball Championship. Adequate technical preparation is equally important as developing a shooting plan. This forces me to be more organized and systematic. With a solid plan and all gear functioning, I felt a renewed sense of control and readiness.

Day 10-26: June 15 - July 21, 2025

- **Work-log:** An intensive burst of on-location filming, documenting the team's training, the new baseball field's construction, and interviewing players and coaches (Li Wei, Li Xuecheng, Zou Qikun, and Qin Yujie). I also captured daily life and training sessions during the summer camp.
- **Reflection:** This was the core of the project. The experience was a rollercoaster of emotions. There were moments of immense success, like when a subject opened up in an interview, and moments of failure, such as when I missed a key shot due to poor positioning. I learned to be more flexible and spontaneous. My initial scripts were a guide, not a rigid rule. The interviews, especially, were a challenge. I learned the art of active listening and the importance of building a genuine rapport to get authentic responses. I also learned to be patient, as some days yielded little usable footage, but were essential for building trust.

Day 27-35: July 22-29, 2025

- **Work-log:** Material sorting, screening, and paper-editing of interviews. Preliminary editing of the first half of the documentary.
- **Reflection:** Transitioning from shooting to editing was a shift in mindset. It felt like solving a different kind of puzzle. The sheer volume of material was overwhelming at first. The "paper editing" process—transcribing interviews and selecting valuable quotes—was tedious but invaluable. It forced me to be incredibly deliberate with my narrative choices. My biggest learning was that a good story is built in the edit suite, not just in the field. The initial rough cut was a success, as it provided a clear framework, and I felt confident in the direction we were heading.

Day 36-41: August 1 - 10, 2025

- **Work-log:** Intensive filming of the National Youth Baseball Competition, including the team's final training, group matches, and the championship final. I focused on capturing key moments and Qin Yujie's condition, as well as the award ceremony.
- **Reflection:** The competition days were the climax of the project. The fast-paced environment required me to be agile and responsive. I felt the pressure to capture every significant moment. The emotional high of seeing the team play and the bittersweet feeling of the final game were both challenging and rewarding to document. I learned to anticipate action and to capture the emotional nuances of a game, not just the technical plays. My initial reflections on ethical practice were tested; I had to be mindful of how I filmed the victories and defeats with respect.

Day 42-50: August 11 - 25, 2025

- **Work-log:** Post-production began, involving material organization, final editing, and refining the documentary's framework. I focused on grasping the rhythm and emotional expression, enhancing artistry. The final film was submitted, and subtitles and the research report were refined.
- **Reflection:** This final stage was about meticulous detail. The rhythm of the film, the emotional beats, and the overall narrative flow became my primary focus. I realized how small edits—a few frames here or there—could completely change the meaning or impact of a scene. This process was a testament to patience and persistence. The final submission was a moment of pride mixed with exhaustion. Refining the subtitles and report allowed me to reflect on the entire journey, from a single idea to a tangible piece of work. The ultimate lesson was that a successful project is a result of a continuous cycle of planning, action, and, most importantly, critical self-reflection.