The Emotional Driving Effect of Role Model Narratives in Ideological and Political Education for College Students

Ziyao Shen*

Chengdu College of Arts and Sciences, Chengdu 610401, Sichuan, China

*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Abstract: Under the demand for innovative development of ideological and political education for college students in the new era, the traditional education model urgently needs to be broken through. Role model narrative, with vivid cases and emotional resonance as the bond, conforms to the cognitive characteristics of young people, can effectively stimulate emotional identification, enhance the appeal and effectiveness of ideological and political education, and has become an important exploration direction for improving the quality of ideological and political education. This paper explores the emotional driving effect of role model narratives in ideological and political education, analyzes how it enhances the effectiveness of education through emotional infiltration, promotes the internalization of college students' thoughts and the externalization of their behaviors, and proposes optimization strategies to improve the appeal and sustainability of role model education.

Keywords: Role Model Narrative; Ideological and political education; Emotionally driven; Emotional resonance; Value recognition

1. Introduction

Role Model Narratives play an important carrier role in ideological and political education, conveying mainstream values through real and vivid character stories. For the group of college students, emotional drive plays a crucial role in cognitive acceptance and behavioral practice. This article focuses on exploring how role model narratives can touch people's hearts and enhance the penetration of ideological and political education, and then constructs a theoretical framework to analyze the mechanism therein.

2. The ideological and political education value and emotional mechanism of Role Model Narrative

2.1. The emotional transmission characteristics of Role Model Narratives

The emotional transmission characteristics of the highly infectious educational discourse form of role model narrative are rooted in people's unique narrative cognition and emotional resonance mechanism. Analyzed from the perspective of

narratology, role model narrative realizes the transformation from abstract value concepts to concrete emotional carriers by constructing plot frameworks, shaping character images, and setting up conflicts and contradictions. Unlike traditional theoretical preaching, role model storytelling is not aimed at directly instilling values. Through the narration of the growth experiences, struggle stories and spiritual qualities of role model figures, the educational intention is integrated throughout the process of the story's beginning, development, transition and conclusion [1]. This narrative approach makes the transmission of emotions hierarchical: The unfolding of the situation at the beginning of the story evokes curiosity and attention, the dilemmas and choices in the development evoke sympathy and admiration, the breakthroughs and achievements at the climax stir up excitement and anticipation, and the elevation at the end leads to reflection and approval. Whether the emotional transmission is effective depends on whether the narrative strategy is artistic. Role model narratives tend to use the first-person or third-person perspective for narration. The former narrative approach enhances the authenticity and immersion of the story by imitating the inner monologues of role models. The latter presents the complete event from an objective perspective, making the story authoritative and credible. From the perspective of narrative rhythm control, the alternation of fast and slow plot progression can generate emotional tension, such as slowing down the narrative speed through detailed portrayal and creating immersive emotional experiences, etc. Accelerate the pace and enhance the emotional impact with the help of crisis conflicts. In addition, the choice of language style also has a direct impact on the effect of emotional transmission: plain and plain language is close to life and is easy to evoke resonance. The poetic expression elevates the emotions and endows the story with aesthetic value. This multi-dimensional narrative design enables role model stories to go beyond simple information transmission and become an active carrier loaded with emotional energy.

2.2. The convergence point between role model narratives and the psychological needs of college students

Role model narrative meets the psychological needs of college students. It is based on the theories of developmental psychology and educational communication. From the perspective of individual psychological development, college students are in a critical period of exploring self-identity and urgently need to refer to the group and value coordinates for self-positioning [2]. Role models, as a concrete carrier of an ideal personality, can provide students with behavioral demonstrations and value references to meet psychological needs such as self-awareness and social comparison. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory holds that the needs for belonging and respect are particularly prominent among college students. Role model narratives present the struggles and achievements of individuals against the collective. On the premise of stimulating the value recognition of the college student group, to provide path guidance for college students to win respect and realize their self-worth, from the perspective of cognitive psychology, college students need concrete thinking as an intermediary to accept abstract theories. Role model narratives transform the education of socialist core values and ideals and beliefs into tangible life scenarios through stories as a carrier, which conforms to the cognitive characteristics of college students' transformation from concrete thinking to abstract thinking. This transformation reduces the difficulty in understanding values and also makes educational content more easily integrated into an individual's cognitive system. Meanwhile, the emotional needs of college students also show diversified characteristics. While students are longing for a strong emotional impact, they are also seeking deep emotional resonance. Role model narratives, through the description of characters' emotional experiences, psychological conflicts and spiritual elevation, can comprehensively meet students' needs for emotional experiences, transforming from superficial emotions such as admiration and being moved to deep emotions such as identification and internalization, thereby forming a multi-level emotional touch.

3. Manifestations of the emotion-driven effect

3.1. Role model narratives evoke emotional resonance

Role model narratives, with their highly infectious reports as the medium, can effectively evoke emotional resonance in

ideological and political education among college students. College students are in a period of rich emotions and deepening self-awareness. Compared with dull theoretical preaching, vivid and interesting role model stories are more likely to have a striking effect on their inner selves. When narrating the figure of Huang Wenxiu, a model of poverty alleviation, who gave up the superior environment of big cities and resolutely returned to her hometown to devote herself to poverty alleviation work and eventually dedicated her entire life to the cause of rural revitalization, braving the heavy rain and night to rush to the homes of disaster victims, the densely packed poverty alleviation plans and insights in the notebook were presented through the narrative, making the students feel as if they were there, deeply experiencing her love for her hometown and her commitment to her duties. Such a narrative technique awakens the students' deep-seated longing for fine qualities such as dedication and responsibility. They will involuntarily place themselves in the background of the story and imagine what choices they would make in the same situation [3]. For instance, the stories of the aerospace team overcoming numerous difficulties and achieving significant breakthroughs in China's aerospace industry, as well as the plots of young researchers working day and night to conduct in-depth research and repeated experiments, can inspire students to think deeply about their professional studies and the pursuit of their future ideals, enabling them to resonate emotionally with the exemplary figures and draw emotional power from the stories. Subsequently, there was a stronger emotional identification with the ideas conveyed by ideological and political education, and favorable conditions were created for the subsequent internalization of values and behavioral guidance.

3.2. Role model narratives promote value recognition

Role model narrative is an important way to promote the realization of college students' value identity. The growth of college students requires a clear value coordinate to point out the direction for them. The ideals and beliefs, moral standards, and spiritual qualities contained in role model figures are made concrete and vivid through narration, making the abstract values perceptible and understandable [4]. When telling the story of Yuan Longping's lifelong dedication to hybrid rice research, all for "saving everyone from hunger," students can see his persistent pursuit of science and deep concern for people's livelihood. This great sentiment and firm belief will imperceptibly influence students' understanding of the value of life. Judging from the narrative process, the unremitting efforts made by role model figures to realize their ideals, as well as the decisive choices they make in the face of temptations and difficulties, have all become the reference objects for students to make value judgments. For instance, Principal Zhang Guimei's establishment of a free girls' high school has helped countless girls in mountainous areas come out of the mountains and changed their destinies. The selflessness and educational passion she has demonstrated should be guided by us to re-examine the connection between personal value and social value, and encourage them to combine their personal ideals with the development of the country and the progress of society. Through the narrative of role models, college students can have a deeper understanding of the connotation of the core socialist values, and gradually move from cognition to identification based on emotional resonance, consciously internalizing the value concepts represented by role models into their own behavioral norms and value pursuits.

4. The optimization practice path of emotion-driven effects

4.1. Selection and cultivation of diverse and genuine role models

Selecting and establishing role models diversely and genuinely is a prerequisite for enhancing the narrative appeal of role models. The core lies in breaking away from the simplistic and idealized way of shaping role models and constructing a well-defined and realistic role model system. From the perspective of diversity, the types of role models need to be expanded to cover different groups, such as political leaders, academic elites, industry role models, and role models around us [5]. The exemplary value of different types of role models varies: Political leaders demonstrate ideals, beliefs, and patriotic sentiments; Academic elites reflect professionalism and the pursuit of innovation; Industry role models, demonstrating the spirit of craftsmanship and professional ethics; The exemplary figures around enhance the appeal of education by increasing its closeness and accessibility. This diversified selection of role models can meet the diverse

psychological needs and value orientations of college students, expand the coverage of role model education, and in the selection of role models, authenticity is a key criterion. It is necessary to abandon the "tall, large, and complete" shaping and perfection, and restore the true growth trajectory and human characteristics of role model figures. Recognizing the limitations and developmental nature of role models and demonstrating their true journey of growing through setbacks and making choices amid conflicts can make the image of role models more credible and vibrant [6]. At the same time, attach importance to the exploration of the details and emotional elements of role models' deeds, and enhance the appeal of role models through life-like situations, personalized words and genuine psychological activities.

4.2. Innovate narratives and expand carriers

Innovative narrative and carrier expansion, as important means to enhance the charm of role model narratives, require breakthroughs in both narrative methods and communication media. In terms of the innovation of narrative methods, narrative techniques should be drawn from film and television art and literary creation to enrich the forms of story expression. The structural approach of using nonlinear narrative and multi-perspective narrative increases the suspense and layers of the story. The montage technique and the expression method of psychological monologue are adopted to enhance the delicacy of emotional expression. Meanwhile, combined with the cognitive characteristics of college students, the lightweight transformation of role model stories to micro-narratives and series stories is achieved to meet the fragmented reading habits. The concept of interactive narrative is introduced into it. And by setting an open ending and guiding the audience to participate in the creation of the story, the audience's subjectivity and sense of immersion can be enhanced. The expansion of carriers requires the full application of new media technologies to build a full-media communication matrix. As for traditional media, it is necessary to optimize the narrative presentation methods of school newspapers, radio broadcasts and publicity boards, and enhance the expressiveness through the integration of text, images, audio and video [7]. In terms of new media, new carriers such as short videos, H5 and interactive games have developed: short videos rapidly spread core content with a strong sense of rhythm and visual impact; H5 adopts interactive design to enhance the immersive experience. In interactive games, the spirit of role models is ingeniously integrated into the entertainment scenarios, achieving the effect of both entertainment and education. Meanwhile, under the dissemination advantages of social media platforms, the dissemination scope and influence of role model stories are expanded mainly through topic discussions, live interviews and community sharing [8].

When innovating narratives and expanding carriers, it is necessary to pay attention to the organic unity of content and form, avoid the weakening of content depth in the pursuit of form innovation, and ensure that narrative techniques and communication carriers serve emotional expression and value transmission [9]. At the same time, a cross-media narrative mechanism should be established to enable the same role model stories to be presented differently through various carriers, thereby generating a communication synergy. Through narrative innovation and carrier expansion, the time and space limitations and formal constraints of traditional education can be broken through, enhancing the appeal and communication effectiveness of role model narratives.

4.3. Strengthen emotional interaction and feedback

Strengthening emotional interaction and feedback is a key link in enhancing the effectiveness of role model narrative education. It is necessary to establish a closed-loop mechanism of "dissemination - interaction - feedback - optimization". At the interaction level, the social attributes of new media platforms should be utilized to build diverse interaction scenarios among teachers and students, students, educators and society [10]. Taking online discussions, thematic debates and role-playing as the carriers, guide college students to exchange their feelings and thoughts about role model stories, enhance emotional communication and ideological collision, encourage college students to participate in the creation and dissemination of role model narratives through writing reflections, shooting short videos, and conducting promotional activities, change passive acceptance to active expression, enhance the sense of participation and subjectivity in education, and establish a feedback mechanism. Relying on the collection and analysis of data through multiple channels, methods

such as questionnaires, online comments, and behavior monitoring are adopted to collect the emotional responses, cognitive changes and behavioral intentions of college students during the process of role model storytelling. The intensity and direction of the emotion-driven effect were quantitatively evaluated by using big data analysis and sentiment computing to determine the key factors of educational effect [11]. At the same time, a rapid response mechanism should be established to promptly answer and guide students' questions, confusions or different opinions, to avoid accumulating negative emotions [12]. In addition, emphasize personalized handling of emotional feedback and provide differentiated guidance and support based on the characteristics and needs of different students.

Interactive feedback aims at the continuous optimization of the educational process as the ultimate goal. Based on the feedback results, adjustments are made to aspects such as the selection criteria for role models, narrative strategies, and communication carriers, to make the educational content closer to the needs of students [13]. Meanwhile, transform students' excellent feedback into a new type of educational resource, such as integrating typical insights into narrative cases and innovative suggestions into teaching practices, thereby forming a virtuous cycle of synergy between educators and learners [14]. By strengthening emotional interaction and feedback, the narrative of role models can be promoted from one-way communication to two-way dialogue, effectively enhancing the pertinence and effectiveness of ideological and political education [15].

5. Conclusion

Role model narrative is an important approach in ideological and political education for college students, and the emotional driving effect depends on multi-dimensional practical optimization. Through measures such as diversified and authentic role model selection, innovative narrative dissemination, enhanced emotional interaction, integration of educational scenarios, and establishment of long-term mechanisms, it is possible to effectively stimulate the emotional resonance of college students and enhance the affinity and effectiveness of ideological and political education. In the future, it is necessary to continue to deepen the exploration of the emotional driving effect of role model narratives, and constantly innovate practical paths per the development of the era and the needs of students, so that the power of role models can truly be internalized as a person and externalized as a matter, helping college students grow up healthily.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1]   Zeng Y, Wu G, 2024, The Application Mechanism, Dilemma and Path of Immersive Teaching in Ideological and Political Courses in Colleges and Universities under the Background of Digitalization of Education. Heilongjiang Higher Education Research, 42(10): 54–59.

[2]   Yao J, Yu S, 2024, Three-Dimensional Exploration of Public Image Construction of Ideological and Political Courses in Colleges and Universities in the New Era. Public Relations World, 2024(22): 85–87.

[3]   Han Y, 2024, Analysis of the Path for Conducting Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities Based on Online Ideological and Political Platforms. Communication and Copyright, 2024(18): 91–93.

[4]   Ma W, 2024, Integration and Inheritance of Chinese Sports Spirit in Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities. Heilongjiang Daily, September 25, 2024 (007).

[5]   Lu Y, Wang Z, 2024, Research on Effective Teaching Behaviors of Blended Teaching of Ideological and Political Courses in Colleges and Universities. Public Relations World, 2024(21): 127–129.

[6]   Kong W, 2024, Analysis on the Path to Building a Compound Editing Talent Team for University Journals in the Era of Media Convergence. Communication and Copyright, 2024(5): 7–10.

[7]   Jiang X, 2024, Research on the Phenomenon of College Students' Online Subculture in the Era of Media Convergence. Journal of Harbin University, 45(2): 125–128.

[8]   Liu J, Jiang T, 2023, Analysis of the Characteristics and Relationship between the Teaching Content and Methods of Ideological and Political Courses in Colleges and Universities. Teaching and Nurturing: Higher Education Forum, 2023(2): 98–101.

[9]   Liu F, 2022, The Value Connotation and Practical Path of Implementing Precise Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities. Science and Education Guide, 2022(30): 97–99.

[10]   Li W, Qi W, 2023, Research on the Reform of Ideological and Political Education in College Courses from the Perspective of Moral Education and Talent Cultivation: Taking Professional Course Teaching as an Example. Yangtze River Series, 2023(6): 179–181.

[11]   Chen H, 2023, The Practical Demand and Mechanism Construction of Two-Way Supply of Ideological and Political Courses and Ideological and Political Teaching Resources in Courses in Colleges and Universities. School Party Building and Ideological Education, 2023(21): 29–32.

[12]   Wang W, 2024, The Contemporary Value and Optimization Path of Role Model Education in Higher Vocational Education from the Perspective of Core Literacy Cultivation. Education & Career, 2024(5): 106–112.

[13]   Bai Y, 2024, Exploration on the Application of Role Model Education in Ideological and Political Courses in Higher Vocational Education. Journal of Jiamusi Vocational College, 40(2): 207–209.

[14]   Cao W, 2023, Exploration and Expansion of Ethnic Cultural Values in Ideological and Political Education in Higher Vocational Colleges. China Ethnic Expo, 2023(11): 96–98.

[15]   Qiao J, 2025, Analysis of the Practical Path of the Exemplary Role of College Student Party Members. University Logistics Research, 2025(1): 50–52.