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Intergroup Contacting in Sports: Chinese Wisdom in Strengthening Community Awareness

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Abstract: With the evolution of globalization and the intensification of the challenge of anti-globalization, the national community and the community with a shared future for mankind are facing unprecedented challenges. Sports activities carry material and spiritual culture through physical practice, and on the basis of meeting the optimal conditions for intergroup contact, it is a powerful means of intergroup contact to build direct and indirect scenes of intergroup interaction. In China, sports promote cultural contacts between people of all ethnic groups in the Chinese nation in direct and indirect ways through their intergroup contacts, stimulate the emotional resonance of the Chinese nation, build a space for exchanges and integration of people of all ethnic groups through sports events, forge a sense of community of the Chinese nation, and build a stage of a community with a shared future for mankind that connects the world in this way. In response to the major changes in the world unseen in a century and strengthening the sense of community, all sports subjects should optimize the scene embedding mechanism of intergroup contact, improve the emotional connection efficiency of sports ceremonies, strengthen the driving force of sports events on cultural exchanges and exchanges, give full play to the role of sports in intergroup contact, forge a sense of community internally and externally, strengthen the sense of community with a shared future for mankind externally, promote the great unity of the people of the world, and respond to global challenges and risks.

Keywords: Intergroup Contact Theory; Sport Function; Community Awareness; Chinese Wisdom

1.Introduction

Under the wave of globalization, the international communication, different ethnic nations have fully formed an intertwined existence of interconnected and interdependent, thus the conflict between two subjects, which are nation-state and mankind, the citizenship of individuals as citizens of a nation-state and as global citizens are overlapping and mixing([Stephen Castles, 2000](#)), which have been the reasons of one that may trigger a crisis of cultural identity. In the choice of cultural values infiltrated and intertwined by the diverse cultural environment, inherit and develop the culture of a country's own nation, and enhance its cultural identity to promote the cause of national unity and progress in an all-round way.

In contrast to the challenges of globalization, the rise of "de-globalization" or even "anti-globalization" trends in recent years—manifested protectionism and separatism—has not only hindered the deepening of economic globalization and international cooperation but also impeded global trade growth([William Milberg, 2024](#)). More detrimentally, it has eroded the bonds of friendship among peoples worldwide, undermining the development of the community with a shared future for mankind. Therefore, strengthening the awareness of a shared future for humanity and reinforcing the sense of national community are both critically important for all countries around the world.

In China, among various policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening national identity, the General Administration of Sport, in collaboration with seven other departments, issued the Guidelines on Promoting the Consolidation of a Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation Through Sports on November 26, 2024. The document emphasizes that sports are not only a vital component of national development but also closely tied to the well-being of the people, playing an irreplaceable role in fostering a strong sense of community among all ethnic groups and promoting their interaction, exchange, and integration. Meanwhile, China has also leveraged sports as a bridge to promote mutual learning and exchanges among different civilizations. In a world fraught with turbulence and uncertainty, this approach has instilled confidence and hope, strengthened friendships, and allowed people to experience the power of unity. It has bolstered faith in jointly creating a brighter future, enabling the world to achieve new glories through civilizational exchanges and mutual learning.

Moreover, sports participation in China facilitates multi-dimensional, cross-domain, and all-encompassing intergroup contact, serving as a crucial socio-psychological mechanism for enhancing ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration, reinforcing the sense of community for the Chinese nation. Furthermore, from the perspective of intergroup contact, China has utilized sports as a bond to enhance mutual understanding between the Chinese people and the rest of the world. This approach facilitates cultural exchanges and mutual learning among diverse civilizations, fostering greater global connectivity.

2.Theoretical Value of Intergroup Contacting in Sports to Strength Community Awareness

Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT), first proposed by Gordon Willard Allport ([Gordon Willard Allport, 1954](#)), has evolved through post-World War II practices in "racial reconciliation—social problem intervention" into a theoretical framework for promoting intergroup harmony. Its core proposition states that social contact between different groups under specific conditions can reduce prejudice, stereotypes, and intergroup threats, thereby improving intergroup relations. Western academia pioneered its integration into the frameworks of Sport for Development & Peace (SDP) and Sports for Social Change (SSC), empirically validating the efficacy of sports interventions in enhancing intergroup relations ([Brenneman L, 2017](#); [Schulenkorf N, 2021](#); [Ekici H, 2021](#)). Chinese scholars, since introducing the theory in 2004, have progressively expanded its application to domains such as urban migrant integration and ethnic unity education ([Chen & Zuo, 2004](#); [Hong & Liu, 2012](#)). Since the Communist Party of China proposed the significant proposition of "strengthening the sense of community for Chinese nation." ICT has been studied as a crucial mechanism in social psychology to promote ethnic interaction, exchange, and integration, to consolidate this communal consciousness. From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, sports—functioning as both a material and spiritual-cultural medium, establishing interactive contact

scenarios, and fulfilling optimal contact conditions—create a distinctive form of direct and indirect intergroup contact that differs fundamentally from other contact modalities.

2.1 Sports as a Vehicle for Intergroup Contact

Intergroup contact can be categorized into direct and indirect forms. Direct contact occurs immediately between subjects through physical activity as the medium, while indirect contact includes vicarious contact(Mazziotta, 2011), extended contact(Wright, 1997), and imagined contact(Crisp, 2009). These respectively alter outgroup perceptions through interactions with ingroup members, who have outgroup connections, social media displaying outgroup information, and imagined scenarios of intergroup engagement. Sports uniquely serve as a cultural vehicle capable of facilitating both direct and indirect contact.

Defined as cultural activities employing physical movement to foster human development, all elements, principles, effects, and their interrelations in sports fundamentally manifest through bodily practice. Whether in traditional ethnic sports or modern athletic disciplines, participants across the three primary domains of physical education, competitive sports, and fitness recreation experience direct contact with their environment through culturally situated physical engagement. This enables bodily self-expression and network relationship formation.

In sports pedagogy, multi-layered teacher-student interactions constitute direct intergroup contact occurring across diverse identities and cultural backgrounds. Through competitive experiences, participants achieve harmony with activities and environments via intensive physical practice(Xiong, 2024), constructing shared sporting spaces that facilitate interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups. Through fitness and recreational activities, participation in event-based sports—such as the rise of rural sports competitions, dragon boat races during specific festivals or celebrations, lion dances, and tug-of-war matches—is not primarily driven by the pursuit of competitive victory. Rather, it facilitates exchanges with other individuals and cultures during the process.

Moreover, across these activities, social networks emerge among people, objects, and information. Whether through watching competitions, sports news coverage, or discussions about athletic events, sports provide a unique context for indirect intergroup contact. This creates opportunities to enhance understanding of other groups.

2.2 Sports environments satisfy Allport's optimal contact conditions

Not all intergroup contact can have a positive effect on interethnic relations; inappropriate contact may even worsen intergroup relations(Li, 2022). Based on this, Allport proposed the optimal conditions hypothesis for intergroup contact within his theoretical framework, emphasizing four optimal conditions: equal status, institutional support, common goals, and intergroup cooperation(Allport, 1954). These four factors

interact to effectively avoid negative contact and its potential adverse effects, fostering positive outcomes in intergroup interactions. In China, the developmental direction of mass sports and the inherent rule-based characteristics of sports activities align theoretically with the optimal conditions for intergroup contact proposed by Allport. This alignment has been significantly demonstrated in specific sports practice settings.

2.2.1 Equal status in sports

Sports serve as an experimental ground for the ideal of equality in human society, ensuring "equality before the rules" through rigid systems while pursuing substantive equality through differentiated safeguards. The Olympic Charter emphasizes that "the practice of sport is a human right. Within the Olympic Movement, everyone must have the opportunity to participate in sports without discrimination of any kind, in accordance with the internationally recognized principles of human rights"(International Olympic Committee. 2025). Similarly, Article 5 of the Sports Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "the state guarantees citizens' equal right to participate in sports activities in accordance with the law"(The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2022), demonstrating that "equality" is a core principle of sports.

China's "mass sports" (qunzhong tiyu) are directed at "all people," reflecting both the fairness of sports and the collective needs of all citizens. In China, "developing sports and enhancing the people's physical fitness" is the fundamental policy and task of sports work, embodying the pursuit of equal rights to health and sports for all(Yu, 2019). Similarly, in Western countries, the corresponding concept is termed "mass sport," where sports are defined as a powerful tool to eliminate gender inequality, incorrect social norms, and outdated gender stereotypes.

Across both Eastern and Western perspectives on sports equality, the pursuit reflects the fundamental premise of Allport's optimal conditions for intergroup contact—equal status—which also aligns with China's basic ethnic principle of "ethnic equality."

2.2.2 Institutional Support in Sports

Sports have always been accompanied by the establishment of shared rules from their inception, and one of the core features of modern sports lies in its rigorous rule systems. These include competition rules and regulations across various events, ensuring fairness through institutionalized frameworks, and extending into organizational management. For instance, the so-called "three pillars" of the Olympic Movement—the International Olympic Committee (IOC), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and International Federations (IFs)—are key manifestations of sports governance.

Additionally, the formulation of sports regulations and policy documents provides strong support for the development of sports and the organization of sporting activities. Since China's reform and opening-up, the government has consistently focused on the

needs of mass sports, issuing a series of policy documents to promote long-term progress in this field. From the introduction of the Outline of the National Fitness Program on June 20, 1995—the first foundational policy for national fitness—to the Opinions on Building a Higher-Level Public Service System for National Fitness issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on March 23, 2022, and further to the legal safeguards for sports development in ethnic regions and traditional ethnic sports outlined in Articles 7 and 8 of the newly revised Sports Law of the People's Republic of China. China has maintained consistent institutional support for mass sports. This support is even more pronounced in the development of ethnic sports, providing a legal framework for sports participation across regions and ethnic groups. The growth of sports is thus grounded in law, and intergroup interactions in sports are guided by principles.

2.2.3 Common Goals in Sports

Sports participation embodies both the continuity of historical traditions and the constructiveness of modern society, yet both aspects reflect the characteristic of fostering interaction and connection among diverse groups through shared goals. The origins of sports are deeply intertwined with early human social activities, where hunting, military training, and games all embodied humanity's shared pursuit of survival and development. In ancient Greece, the Sacred Truce Treaty institutionalized this shared aspiration for the first time, suspending all military conflicts during the ancient Olympic Games, demonstrating a collective desire for peace. In the modern Olympic era, the Olympic Truce initiative has been adopted by consensus in United Nations General Assembly resolutions 16 consecutive times since 1992, with its core philosophy still rooted in the shared goal of using sports as a medium to mitigate conflicts.

In contemporary society, the shared goals of sports participation manifest in richer and more diverse forms of practice. At the individual level, groups of different ages, genders, regions, and cultural backgrounds share a common pursuit of physical fitness and health, invigorating mass sports. In competitive sports, rule-bound cooperative competition enables diverse groups to engage in positive interactions within a unified framework. Team sports, through well-defined role divisions and shared objectives, foster the formation of a "goal-oriented community" among participants with varied identities, dissolving cognitive barriers between groups through collaboration.

This group cohesion achieved via shared goals exhibits deeper value tensions in the construction of national identity. Athletes representing their countries in competitions carry the collective honor of "winning glory for the nation." Spectators cheering for teams representing their own groups engage in a process of affirming their cultural identity through sports symbols. The preservation and development of traditional ethnic sports bind individual life experiences to collective cultural memory, ultimately fostering a stable sense of cultural belonging.

These multifaceted interactions, spurred by the shared goals of sports, essentially constitute a critical pathway for diverse groups to achieve positive contact through sports participation.

2.2.4 Intergroup Cooperation in Sports

The successful implementation of sporting activities is not attributable to isolated individuals, but rather emerges from collaborative behaviors among multiple stakeholders. Sports frequently involve various forms of cross-group cooperation that collectively facilitate the realization of sporting outcomes and functions. For instance, sports participation often brings together individuals of diverse genders, ages, skill levels, roles, and even varying regional, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds within a single team. These participants collaborate toward the shared objective of competitive success, thereby establishing positive intergroup interactions.

In the broader development of sports, a vertical cooperative framework for talent cultivation exists, wherein grassroots sports schools and educational institutions systematically nurture and supply athletes to higher-level organizations. This institutionalized cooperation promotes the mobility of sports talents across different regions and ethnic groups, fostering cultural exchange and integration through athletic endeavors. Concurrently, the sports industry exhibits a pattern of multi-stakeholder synergy. In China, the integrated development model combining cultural, sports, and tourism sectors has enabled populations across various regions and ethnicities to achieve material prosperity while simultaneously being enriched by the ethos of sports.

Consequently, the multi-stakeholder and multi-tiered intergroup cooperation inherent in sports provides a constructive paradigm for facilitating intergroup contact among diverse ethnicities and even across national boundaries. This framework aligns with contemporary theoretical perspectives on intergroup relations while demonstrating practical efficacy in real-world applications.

2.3 Sports Create Multi-Group Interaction Scenarios

Sports, through their unique spatiotemporal fields and dual practices of physicality and culture, construct multi-layered intergroup interactions that manifest in two fundamental forms:

The first form involves direct interaction within physical spaces, typically exemplified by event-based sports activities. Events such as "Village Basketball Association" and "Village Super League" integrate competitive performances, cultural exhibitions, and intangible cultural heritage markets into a unified multi-dimensional space. This design facilitates multifaceted interactions—physical, cultural, and economic—among multiethnic athletes and spectators within a shared physical environment. Such activities use bodily participation as a connective thread, transforming cultural differences into shared experiences and fostering an interactive structure characterized

by mutual inclusion. Ethnic festival sports further reinforce this mechanism. For instance, activities like the Zhuang ethnic group's "March Third Song Festival" featuring events such as bamboo pole racing and Dong ethnic wrestling serve as living vehicles for cultural integration, where traditional competitions become dynamic mediums for cultural exchange.

The second form relies on mediated event dissemination, establishing transregional emotional connections through indirect interaction in virtual spaces. Large-scale events such as the World Cup and the Olympics, through omnichannel media coverage, create an "imagined community" among geographically dispersed audiences. When national football teams compete broadcasted, real-time social media commentary often dominates trending lists. This collective emotional resonance, transcending physical space, essentially constructs an interaction pattern rooted in national and ethnic identity.

These two forms demonstrate how sports, as a socio-cultural practice, facilitate intergroup interaction through both embodied co-presence and digitally mediated engagement, thereby contributing to broader processes of social cohesion and identity formation. The equalized development of national fitness public services provides structural support for the aforementioned interactions. The cross-regional networking system of urban community smart fitness centers and the standardized coverage of county-level public sports facilities not only lower the threshold for public participation but also create normalized interaction scenarios.

Sports have established a multidimensional interaction structure encompassing physical contact, media connectivity, and public services, offering spatial contexts for fostering a strong sense of community among the Chinese nation. This structure preserves the cultural distinctiveness of various groups while promoting shared values, ultimately realizing an interactive paradigm characterized by "appreciating each other's uniqueness and achieving collective harmony."

3.Operational Mechanisms of Intergroup Contacting in Sports to Strengthen Community Awareness

From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, sports function as a multidimensional platform that facilitates cultural engagement through participatory mechanisms, generates emotional resonance through ritualized interactions, and constructs communicative spaces through organized events. Within the domestic context, these sport-mediated processes significantly enhance intergroup understanding, foster affective empathy, and strengthen collective identification among diverse regional and ethnic populations. This dynamic promotes ethnic interaction, cultural exchange, and social integration, thereby contributing to the formation and consolidation of a shared ingroup identity as the Chinese nation-state and reinforcing the consciousness of a national community with shared destiny.

On the international dimension, sports serve as an effective medium for cross-cultural

communication, facilitating mutual understanding among global populations and reinforcing the interconnectedness of the shared future for humanity.

3.1 Sports Participation Facilitates Cultural Engagement

Sports, as both tangible physical practices and intangible cultural carriers, serve as crucial platforms for interpersonal communication and vital bridges for intergroup interaction and integration. Through participation in various athletic activities and exposure to diverse regional and ethnic sports cultures, participants enhance their understanding of different groups—whether across regions, ethnicities, or even nations—leading to cognitive renewal. This process progressively narrows intergroup distances, first materially and then ideologically, fostering closer intergroup relations.

Firstly, sports facilitate direct intergroup interaction through embodied practices, enabling participants to engage with the physical cultures of diverse groups and interact with members from different regions or ethnic backgrounds. For instance, traditional sports activities organized in multiethnic embedded communities and rural sporting events effectively promote communication and connection among people from various regions and ethnic groups. Such interactions enhance mutual understanding across regions and ethnicities, mitigate cognitive barriers arising from differences and unfamiliarity, and thereby foster closer intergroup relations.

Secondly, the cultural embeddedness generated through sports participation integrates the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation—represented by ethnic traditional sports—into public consciousness. The learning of diverse ethnic and regional cultures is internalized subtly, manifesting in both cognition and practice. As exemplified by China's widespread traditional national fitness initiatives and the integration of traditional sports into school curricula, these efforts enrich public understanding of the Chinese nation and strengthen cultural identification across ethnic groups. Another illustration is the dissemination of ethnic minority traditional sports beyond their regions of origin. For example, qiang huapao (a traditional ball game originating from Zhuang and Dong ethnic communities in southern China) has gained competitive traction among northern teams in the National Traditional Games of Ethnic Minorities. Whether through introducing traditional sports into schools or the cross-regional proliferation of ethnic sports, these phenomena fundamentally reflect the externalization of cultural identity into practice. When participants from different ethnic backgrounds compete under mutually recognized rules, and when the cultural significance of these sports is accepted and reinterpreted by diverse groups, pluralistic ethnic sports cultures coalesce into shared cultural genes through embedded interaction.

Thirdly, cognitive renewal becomes internalized through direct or indirect intergroup encounters with both the material and spiritual dimensions of sports culture. This process extends awareness of diverse regional and ethnic sports cultures across the Chinese nation, ultimately fostering a shared identification with the common sporting culture of the Chinese nation. What's more, the process culminates in the crystallization

of a distinctive spiritual core and value paradigm within the Chinese cultural system. Simultaneously, this same mechanism facilitates international sports cultural exchange, thereby contributing to the construction of a global community with the shared future for humanity.

3.2 Sports Rituals Facilitate Affective Interaction

The ritualistic construction of sports has existed since the ancient Olympic Games. As Randall Collins points out, rituals function as interaction ritual chains that generate group solidarity through processes such as mutual focus of attention, emotional arousal, and empathic connection among participants(Collins, 2004). Numerous sports rituals—including opening and closing ceremonies, award presentations, and flag-raising ceremonies—involve interactions among multiple actors. In China, scenarios, where multiple ethnic groups collectively participate in sports rituals are common, naturally facilitating intergroup contact during these ceremonies. This interaction evokes emotional resonance and strengthens the affective bonds and identity cohesion among various ethnic groups.

Moreover, in international sporting events hosted by China, sports rituals are often given significant emphasis. This practice helps enhance interactions between China and people from around the world, fostering mutual understanding and thereby contributing to the formation of the shared community.

First, the sense of identity inspired by collective memory and cultural euphoria. In Sports Rituals, people of all ethnic groups enter a cultural space centered on sports, temporarily setting aside their individual social attributes from daily life and immersing themselves in a collective identity fostered through ritual interactions. Within this context, identities and statuses are dynamically reconfigured, enabling participants to communicate and interact in more direct ways. Through these ritualistic engagements, collective memory and cultural euphoria are symbiotically generated, cultivating a sense of identity uniquely belonging to the Chinese nation. For example, Guangxi's Hua Pao Festival provides young people with a window into traditional culture and craftsmanship. The collective memory formed through this festival subtly internalizes collective values into individual value systems, gradually constructing collective identity and a sense of community consciousness(Zhao, 2025). On the international stage, athletes from different nations gather to craft narratives of friendship and peace. Through media dissemination, these stories expand intergroup contact, forming shared memories and perceptions that transcend regions and nationalities. This phenomenon serves as an emotional signifier cherished by people worldwide.

Second, the shared mission of traditional cultural transmission. In China, sports rituals primarily manifest in festival events and athletic competitions. Though distinct in form, both collectively construct a sense of mission intrinsic to the Chinese nation or the international identity. Festival events serve as concentrated spaces for exhibiting ethnic traditional sports culture. Through ritualized cultural performances and participatory

interactions, they engender a commitment to cultural transmission. For instance, when traditional sports like Tai Chi and dragon boat racing feature in celebratory settings, participants perceive the traditional essence of cultural roots through observation and engagement. These multilayered interactions foster a conscious commitment to intergenerational responsibility ("It falls upon our generation to transmit"), propelling traditional sports from living practice to living transmission. Internationally, recurring sporting events—from the Olympic Games to various comprehensive and single-sport competitions—have evolved into globally shared traditions. Each hosting by different cities in China more and more, constitutes a renewed act of worldwide cultural transmission. This process enables broader global access to sports culture, generating a shared cultural consensus across civilizations.

Third, the temporary dissolution of identity boundaries. Within sports rituals, individual differences are minimized as personal emotions become intimately bonded through collective interactions. During these ritualistic engagements, participants experience collective effervescence that weakens the boundaries of the "self" while strengthening the "we" identity. China's tradition of sports rituals, dating back to antiquity and continuing in contemporary festive sports, maintains cultural continuity that attracts participants through its rootedness in heritage, fostering a profound sense of belonging.

For instance, during the Ethnic Unity Gala at the 12th National Traditional Games of Ethnic Groups, representatives from all 56 ethnic groups gathered through performances, interactive activities, and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions. This convergence dissolved interethnic boundaries amid collective euphoria, fortifying the shared consciousness of the Chinese nation.

Furthermore, international multisport events hosted by China—such as the Chengdu 2021 FISU World University Games (held in 2023) and the 2025 World Games—promote universal values of global unity, friendship, and peace. These events embody sporting values of solidarity, inclusivity, and diversity, forging worldwide consensus through their celebration of humanity's common aspirations.

3.3 Sporting events construct platforms for exchange.

First, sporting events construct embodied communicative spaces. Bourdieu's field theory posits that spatial segregation equates to social segregation (Bourdieu P, 2010). As distinctive temporary fields characterized by openness, public accessibility, and intergroup contact, sporting events transiently dismantle physical and social barriers. Participants engage as equals—whether athletes or spectators—transcending ethnic divides and fixed social roles. This dynamic fosters mutual interaction and establishes foundational conditions for identity formation through contact and cognitive engagement. For example, in Guizhou province, China, the "Liangjiang-Liangcun" sporting events catalyze the transformation of interethnic interactions from geographically constrained patterns to multidimensional exchanges. These events create cross-kinship, cross-regional, and cross-ethnic integration spaces amid evolving

social mobility and ethnic relations.

Similarly, international sporting events facilitate intergroup contact among diverse nationalities, races, and socioeconomic strata within shared arenas. Illustratively, South Sudan's men's basketball team—representing a nation, where over 92% of the population lives below the international poverty line (World Bank, 2023: \$2.15/day)—qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Competing against teams from developed nations generated not only direct athlete-to-athlete contact but also indirect global awareness of South Sudan. Such encounters significantly advance the construction of a community with the shared future for mankind.

Second, multi-stakeholder synergy elevates intergroup contact to new heights. With the integrated development of sports, culture, and tourism, sporting events increasingly demonstrate collaborative organization among diverse actors. The coordinated mobilization of governments, market entities, social organizations, educational institutions, research bodies, and medical agencies ensures successful event execution, propelling cross-group interactions into multidimensional and multi-domain advancement. For instance, Guizhou Province leverages its abundant traditional village resources to revitalize the cultural heritage of Miao, Dong, and Bouyei ethnic groups. Through innovative rural sports brands like "Village Super League" (Cun Chao), "Village Basketball Association" (Cun BA), and "Village Runway" (Cun T, referring to ethnic fashion showcases), interethnic contact blossoms across geographical and social dimensions. These initiatives deepen narrative pathways for generating Chinese national cultural identity.

Concurrently, globalization in sports industries fosters transnational corporate partnerships that intensify exchanges among individuals from different nations and fields. Illustratively, Olympic table tennis champion Fan Zhendong joined Major League Table Tennis (MLTT) in the United States as a strategic investor. This engagement not only amplifies the sport's global reach but also enhances Western understanding of Chinese athletics—particularly in the U.S.—forging broader global sports consensus.

Third, modern sports media—guided by sporting events—amplify vicarious intergroup contact effects. Amid internet-driven information dissemination, the convergence of traditional and new media enables sporting events across China to gain viral traction through publicly engaging formats. Digital spectatorship constructs spatiotemporal interaction spaces via social platforms, facilitating intergroup contact among nationwide audiences through shared viewing and discourse. This dynamic fosters emotional exchange and strengthens Chinese national cohesion. During the Paris Olympics, China Media Group's digital platforms implemented a priority reporting mechanism, delivering "gold medal moments" instantly to all ethnic groups nationwide. The campaign produced 2,105 content pieces with over 12.6 billion engagements and 705 short videos exceeding 7.75 billion views—setting records for mega-event coverage. This comprehensive strategy dominated domestic digital discourse,

maintaining discursive dominance while forging the consciousness of the Chinese national community.

Internationally, Chinese media innovatively leverage online news portals, blogs, and social apps to propel traditional sports culture globally. Web-mediated cultural encounters enhance China's athletic connections worldwide, deepening global understanding of Chinese civilization.

4.Implementation Pathways of Intergroup Contacting in Sports to Strength Community Awareness

To address the impact of globalization on nation-states and counter-globalization challenges to a community with a shared future for mankind, sports serve as an effective mediator—particularly through their inherent intergroup contact mechanisms. Domestically, they strengthen national identity; internationally, they foster global consensus, essentially shaping communal consciousness at both internal and external levels. Based on optimal conditions for intergroup contact and its operational mechanisms within sports, these Implementation Pathways should be strategically leveraged to maximize sport-driven intergroup engagement.

4.1 Optimize contextual embedding

Intergroup contact emerges from engagements with both material and spiritual dimensions of sports culture. Consequently, facilitating mutual embedding of diverse athletic traditions across groups is essential. This enables the organic integration of exemplary sports culture into communal practices, where intergroup contact occurs organically—permeating both tangible and intangible realms of human interaction.

First, expanding contexts for intergroup contact in sports and increasing contact frequency. The key lies in accelerating sports equity initiatives and enhancing sports infrastructure, ensuring all ethnic groups can integrate into athletic participation and incorporate physical activities into daily life. This requires advancing the construction of public sports facilities—including stadiums, national fitness centers, fitness trails, and outdoor sports amenities. For instance, Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province has significantly elevated regional sports public services. Township, community, and administrative village sports infrastructure now achieves 100% coverage. This enables residents to routinely engage in both modern and ethnic traditional sports activities, thereby increasing direct physical engagement and indirect cultural exposure among local populations.

Second, enriching culturally embedded sports spaces to enhance contact quality. This necessitates multidimensional integration across temporal, spatial, and cultural domains—simultaneously overlapping athletic participation timelines across diverse groups while transforming routine physical activities into cultural displays. The approach requires fusing cultural symbols with modern sports venues, thereby

converting athletic spaces into fluid showcases of heritage and social contexts. For example, Hohhot's Ethnic Cultural Sports Center in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region synthesizes Mongolian cultural motifs (yurt-shaped architecture, morin khuur patterns) with contemporary facilities. Its complex integrates an international equestrian venue, wrestling arenas, and an equine culture museum—blending modern sports with ethnic traditional competitions and cultural exhibitions. This symbiosis ensures every athletic engagement becomes an immersive experience in ethnic cultural transmission.

Third, strengthening cognition of indigenous sports culture while broadening understanding of foreign athletic traditions, thereby achieving unconscious integration of contact. The pivotal strategy involves embedding ethnic sports culture into daily life practices and incorporating it into young learners' educational curricula. Complementary exposure to sports cultures from other nations and ethnicities plants the seeds for expanded intergroup contact within individuals. This cultivates informed perspectives toward both indigenous and foreign sports traditions, simultaneously reinforcing national community consciousness while fostering an open, inclusive human community consciousness.

4.2 Enhance ritual interaction efficacy

Ritual practices profoundly participate in constructing political realities at cognitive dimensions while exerting imperceptible formative functions within affective fields(Kertzer, 1989) . Sports rituals transmute intended emotions into collective action through embodied practices, awakening shared sentiments via group interactions. Consequently, enhancing the efficacy of sports rituals in catalyzing emotional reciprocity remains imperative.

First, deepening collective memory and stimulating shared emotions. Domestically, sports rituals should intensify national collective memory and awaken ethnic sentiments; internationally, they must embed themes of global unity, inclusivity, and peace to evoke sympathetic resonance. For instance, China's urban sporting events frequently integrate local cultural elements, producing content that synthesizes ethnic heritage with athletic competitions. This approach reinforces national memory and strengthens ethno-cultural bonds. At the opening ceremony of the 12th World Games in Chengdu, China pioneered having athletes with disabilities carry the national flag—underscoring the core value that "Sport Belongs to Everyone." This act ignited global advocacy for inclusivity within the international sports community, thereby fortifying worldwide athletic consensus.

Second, enhancing the sanctity of sports rituals to foster cultural conscientization. The crux lies in transforming indirect perceptions of sports culture into direct embodied practices during intergroup contact, enabling participants to undergo subject position transformation within ritual frameworks. Domestically, this cultivates cultural transmission and patriotic education through sports; internationally, it promotes open

and inclusive athletic participation philosophies. This dual approach simultaneously fortifies national community consciousness while deepening commitment to the human community.

For instance, Guangxi's Hua Pao Festival facilitates tourists' transition from spectators to active participants. Engaging directly with firecracker culture through ritual interactions fosters intimate cultural connections and instills intergenerational transmission responsibilities. During the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, China—amid COVID-19 challenges—embodied people-centered principles through solidarity, innovation, and inclusive co-creation. This approach epitomized the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, directing global attention toward this collective vision.

Third, strengthening identity formation within sports rituals. Domestically, this involves creating interactive contexts, where "state presence" and "ethnic presence" are foregrounded during athletic ceremonies. Internationally, it manifests as projecting national image and global responsibility—simultaneously reinforcing ethnic identity consciousness while elevating international awareness within the global community.

For instance, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has transformed the Nadam Festival into a vital vehicle for Chinese national community consciousness. By prominently featuring Chinese cultural symbols across event designs, this sports ritual concurrently functions as an ethnic identity affirmation ceremony. Globally, China actively supports sports infrastructure development and talent cultivation in developing nations, steadfastly promoting mutual learning among sporting civilizations and implementing the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind.

4.3 Strengthen the propulsive efficacy of sporting events

Sporting events represent the most dynamic and influential component within the athletic domain. Successful events generate not only material benefits but also profound spiritual impacts. Optimizing event management mechanisms, advancing integrated industrial development, and strategically leveraging sports media are essential to maximizing positive intergroup contact through athletic competitions. This approach fortifies national community consciousness domestically while fostering global consensus internationally.

First, refining operational mechanisms for recurring sporting events to elevate execution quality and construct robust intergroup contact spaces. While athletic competitions temporarily dissolve spatial segregation among groups, their transient nature necessitates robust operational frameworks. Continuous refinement of event standards—aligned with hosting objectives—promotes standardized execution. For instance, Zhaotong City in Yunnan Province exemplifies meticulous event management in developing "sports-plus" ethnic integration initiatives. By embedding Chinese cultural elements and humanistic care into minute details, it crafts the distinctive

"Zhaotong Impression." Through top-tier coordination, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and standardized protocols, the city integrates IoT, big data, facial recognition, and GPS tracking technologies. This comprehensive system ensures precision across racecourses, medal ceremonies, transportation, and medical support—allowing diverse ethnic groups to experience the allure of sports within Chinese modernization.

Simultaneously, at the 12th World Games in Chengdu, locally developed "Tangpa" robotic cheerleaders and AI-driven last-mile delivery systems debuted in international competition. These innovations left indelible impressions on global athletes and spectators, enhancing worldwide understanding of China's technological capabilities.

Second, advancing the integrated development of sports, cultural, and tourism industries to leverage sporting events as catalysts for multidimensional intergroup contact across sectors while strengthening content construction of such engagements. Integrated sporting events simultaneously boost local socioeconomic development and facilitate cross-group interactions. The key lies in amplifying synergistic effects through comprehensive resource integration and coordinated multi-stakeholder advancement. For instance, Honghe Prefecture in Yunnan Province connects ethnic cultural villages with natural landscapes via specialized sports tourism routes. By creating athletic tourism destinations, itineraries, and competitions, these initiatives propel rural hospitality industries—attracting over 800,000 annual long-stay guests to traditional village inns. This model creates abundant opportunities for interactions, exchanges, and integration among diverse ethnic groups.

Similarly, during the 12th World Games, Chengdu synchronized cultural experiences across all 27 venues in eight competition zones. From Sanxingdui-inspired torch relays to cultural performances at Wuhou Shrine, from Panda Base interactions to community sports carnivals, these initiatives constructed innovative "sports + cultural tourism" consumption scenarios. This approach captivated global attention while deepening cross-cultural engagements worldwide.

Third, crafting compelling sports narratives to guide positive event dissemination and reinforce shared orientations in intergroup contact. As a dominant domain in contemporary mainstream media, sporting events warrant strategic utilization of communication channels—particularly diverse new media platforms. Domestically, this entails centering communications on ethnic athletic spirit while consistently mitigating public opinion risks. Internationally, sports messaging should align with the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, transforming event coverage into bridges connecting diverse groups. For example, during the 2024 Paris Olympics, China Media Group's digital platforms launched the "#ProudofTeamChina" initiative. This campaign engaged 237 media entities in disseminating medal achievements, generating over 500 million organic engagements as netizens actively participated. By focusing nationwide attention on Olympic performances, it awakened profound national pride across all ethnic groups.

Concurrently at the 12th World Games. China hosted the Global Sports Culture Forum addressing themes like "The Social Value of Sports in the Post-Pandemic Era." This platform advanced global sports governance dialogues, demonstrating deep commitment to humanity's shared future.

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