

A Study on Strengthening the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation Among Youth in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Through the 15th National Games

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Abstract

The 15th National Games, which is hosted by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area as an integrated region, mark a major domestic sporting event whose impact on forging a strong sense of the Chinese national community among young people in the three jurisdictions will be profound. By unpacking the internal logic from the twin perspectives of collective memory and emotional identification, this paper argues that the Games' ritualized sports and competitive spectacles can create shared memories and spark emotional resonance, thereby strengthening youth's sense of group belonging and identity. On this basis, it analyzes the Games' value across political, economic and cultural dimensions—enhancing national identity, accelerating regional economic integration and amplifying the influence of traditional culture. Finally, it offers post-Games implementation proposals from three angles—spatial production, media communication and social interaction—advocating the sustained consolidation and deepening of a Chinese national community consciousness among Greater Bay Area youth through the activation of memory sites, narrative innovation and cross-border volunteer initiatives.

Keywords: The 15th National Games, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao youth, a strong sense of the Chinese national community, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

1. The Internal Logic of Strengthening the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation Among Youth in the Greater Bay Area via the 15th National Games

1.1 Collective Memory

Every social group is rooted in its

corresponding collective memory. The collective memory embedded in the subconscious of members of the Chinese national community forms the foundation for forging a strong sense of the Chinese national community for the

Chinese nation.¹ Collective memory, as a medium for transmitting social norms and values, can reconstruct the past and foster a shared identity among individuals, thereby building a sense of community that transcends individual consciousness.² Based on the collective memory of the Chinese national community, members can consciously accept the discipline and guidance of shared social norms and values, ultimately forming a “pluralistic and integrated” sense of the Chinese national community.

Consciousness is a product of society. Memory, as the medium through which social reality is transformed into consciousness, carries the marks of society and history. Memory has a layered nature: individual memory and collective memory give rise to different forms of consciousness. The former forms individual consciousness, while the latter forms collective consciousness—that is, a sense of community. The two interact and transform into one another. When individual consciousness resonates collectively and individuals subconsciously affirm the norms and values of the community, a sense of communal identity is established.

This communal consciousness, shaped by shared norms and values, influences individual memory from the top down through collective memory. Shared memory exists as a transitional form between individual and collective memory, providing the foundation for the formation of collective memory.

Given the vast territory of the Chinese nation, members of the Chinese national community have diverse living habits and social experiences, which may lead to varied perceptions of the same group events. For the Chinese national community as a whole, a single diachronic shared memory is insufficient to foster a profound sense of communal identity characterized by shared weal and woe, honor and disgrace, life and death, and a common destiny. Instead, it may lead to a diffusion of consciousness—like sound waves dissipating over distance. The further away from the event, the weaker the communal foundation becomes.

In general, shared memory extracts common

fragments from individual memories. Collective memory aggregates and reorganizes these shared memories into a coherent form with shared norms and values, thereby forming a stable, enduring, and value-oriented sense of the Chinese national community.

To forge a strong sense of the Chinese national community, it is essential to create, uncover, and awaken shared memories. Memory relies on media such as space, behavior, symbols, or rituals to exist.³ Performance-based events at the 15th National Games, as an integral part of mass sports activities, are deeply rooted in Chinese culture. These localized and symbolic performances, carried out through traditional Chinese sports, are rich in national metaphor. Through ceremonial celebrations, they encode and display national characteristics via language, imagery, and dance, generating shared memories with national traits. These shared memories provide a mnemonic foundation for guiding youth in the Greater Bay Area to embrace the norms and values of the Chinese national community.

1.2 Emotional Identity

Emotional identity is the core element and focal point in forging a strong sense of the Chinese national community for the Chinese nation.⁴ Emotions shape an individual’s understanding and perception of social values. Positive emotional experiences can transform cognitive understanding into emotional identification, fostering a strong sense of belonging to the community. Identification is the psychological mechanism through which individuals develop a sense of belonging to the community. Emotional identity, driven by emotions such as belonging, leads individuals to imitate the values and norms of the community, forming behavioral patterns similar to those of other community members.

As Durkheim stated in *The Division of Labor in Society*, collective consciousness arises from the natural tendency of individuals to conform.⁵ It

¹ Wang Mingke. (2006). *On Chinese Borderlands Historical Memory and Ethnic identity*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 50-51.

² Jan Assmann, Chen Guozhan. (2016). What is “cultural memory”? *Foreign Theoretical Trends*, (06), 18-26.

³ Zhao Jingrong. (2020). The generative mechanism and classic construction of national memory. *Study and Practice*, (10), 120-131.

⁴ Liu Jichang, Zengxing. (2020). Affective Identification as Key Element in Forging a Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation. *Journal of South-Central Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, (6), 11-16.

⁵ David Émile Durkheim. (2013). *De la division du travail social*. (Qu Dong Trans.). SDX Joint Publishing Company, 61-62.

is reinforced through shared emotions and consolidated through symbolic systems such as rituals. Durkheim further noted that opposing consciousnesses tend to cancel each other out, while similar consciousnesses merge into the collective ideas of the community and are transformed into its driving force for development. Thus, shared emotion is a crucial psychological foundation for the survival of a community. For the Chinese national community, shared emotion is the internal bond that connects all the ethnic groups and the basis for generating a sense of national belonging, honor, pride, and responsibility.

Emotional identity serves as a key link between cognitive identity and behavioral identity.¹ It is the main bridge connecting individual behavior and communal consciousness and can have a significant impact on the development of society and the nation. Emotional identity is built upon the psychological foundation of shared emotion and is the aggregation of individual emotions. However, if there is only a superficial shared emotion without effective means of consolidation, a strong sense of the Chinese national community cannot be formed.

On the one hand, individual emotions naturally tend toward entropy—tending to increase in complexity due to diverse life experiences. On the other hand, the Chinese national community is composed of countless individuals with differing emotional experiences, which can conflict with the unity of the community. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate collective emotions and consciousness through “aggregation, gathering, and assembly,” aligning individual emotions with the collective emotions of the Chinese nation and maintaining the “unity” of community consciousness within a “pluralistic” context.²

Specifically, the 15th National Games can use shared emotion as a medium to strengthen the emotional identity of youth in the Greater Bay Area toward the Chinese national community. On the one hand, the Games create ritualized competitions that generate dramatic tension,

providing opportunities for the emergence of collective emotions. On the other hand, the Games not only evoke shared emotions such as joy, excitement, and disappointment but also offer a focal point for community members through competitions and performances, further consolidating the unity of emotional identity.

In short, as a platform for showcasing national unity and cultural diversity, the 15th National Games can use the unique universal language of sports to create a lasting atmosphere of national collective participation. This enables different ethnic groups to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, achieve spiritual communication and emotional resonance, and weave emotional bonds that forge a strong sense of the Chinese national community among youth in the Greater Bay Area.

2. The Value Connotation of Strengthening the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation Among Youth in the Greater Bay Area Through the 15th National Games

2.1 Political Value

Youth in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area represent the future of the region. However, due to the unique institutional backgrounds of Hong Kong and Macao, there is a degree of cognitive ambiguity in national identity among youth in these areas.³ At the political level, the 15th National Games transcend the scope of a mere political ritual. From the preparation to the execution of the Games, from the symbolic construction of the mascots to the dissemination of slogans such as “Passionate National Games, Dynamic Greater Bay Area,” youth in the region are immersed in a social atmosphere of regional coordination and joint event organization under the overall guidance of national forces.

Youth in the Greater Bay Area not only participate in the Games as spectators, volunteers, and athletes, contributing to its success, but also strengthen their collective memory of working together to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Through publicity and guidance, these youth can develop a regional identity of integrated development in the Greater Bay Area and a recognition of the nation’s economic strength

¹ Lin Junchang, Zhang Hongli, Zhaomin. (2021). An Analysis of the Path to Cultivate the Chinese National Community Consciousness from the Perspective of E-motional Identity. *Heilongjiang National Series*, (02), 1-7.

² David Émile Durkheim. (2011). *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. (Qu Dong, Ji Zhe Trans.). Beijing: The Commercial Press, 589-590.

³ Kong Wenhao, Ren Ziyi, Jing Huaibin. (2023). Behavioral effects and formation mechanism of Hong Kong-Macao youth cross-border development policies. *Youth Exploration*, (02), 98-112.

and organizational capacity, thereby consolidating the foundation of their national identity.

2.2 Economic Value

Building a prosperous world-class bay area through joint efforts is the goal of social and economic development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Against the backdrop of high-quality development, the co-hosting of the 15th National Games by Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao has given rise to a new form of the event economy — “National Games Economy.” This economy uses sports as a new growth point, promoting the integrated development of sports with culture, tourism, business, education, and technology.

The National Games Economy can foster industrial integration and innovation, cultivate brand value for enterprises, and reflect social responsibility and commitment to the era. For youth in the Greater Bay Area, models such as industry-education integration have driven deep collaboration between universities and enterprises, creating more opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. This strengthens their recognition of a shared national economic interest and enhances their strong sense of identity and belonging to the Chinese nation.

2.3 Cultural Value

Hong Kong, Macao and the Pearl River Delta are rooted in Lingnan culture. However, over the course of history, Lingnan culture in the mainland has evolved under the influence of socialism and reform and opening-up, while in Hong Kong and Macao, it has developed under colonial rule and liberal capitalism, forming a unique, hybrid, East-meets-West cultural landscape.¹

Forging a strong sense of the Chinese national community among youth in the Greater Bay Area can enhance the discourse and influence of Chinese traditional culture in Hong Kong and Macao. Traditional Chinese culture, which integrates cultural symbols from all ethnic groups, provides a strong medium for unifying the “pluralistic” cultures under a shared “unity.”

At the 15th National Games, traditional Chinese

sports such as dragon boat racing, Go, Tai Chi, and dragon and lion dances were performed as living embodiments of cultural heritage. Building on this inheritance, youth in the Greater Bay Area can create new cultural expressions to understand and represent themselves, achieving cultural innovation rooted in tradition.

3. Recommendations for Strengthening the Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation Among Youth in the Greater Bay Area in the Post-National Games Era

3.1 Spatial Dimension

Space serves as a container for meaning and emotion. It is both a product and a producer of social relations. Through planning, design, and symbolic attribution, space can be shaped into a carrier for conveying specific ideologies and values.²

The 15th National Games created a temporary memory space that transcended administrative boundaries. However, in the post-Games era, since the temporal immediacy of memory has departed from the shared spatial context, it is necessary to recall, awaken, consolidate, and sublimate the shared memory, and to endow it with national-level significance.

First, we should awaken the shared memory of Greater Bay Area youth within tangible physical spaces. The three regions of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao possess a large number of Games venues, which are spaces that carry the emotions and meanings of the 15th National Games. The events that took place within these venues provide raw material for creating shared memory among youth.

When these youth revisit the venues in the post-Games era, their memories of participating in or contributing to the Games—as athletes, spectators, or volunteers—will be reactivated. At this point, the shared memory of the Games can be transformed into a longitudinal, diachronic collective memory.

One, in the post-Games era, we should fully open up the venues and fully leverage the “National Games legacy.” This will give youth more opportunities to interact with these spaces. Inside the venues, exhibitions can be set up to showcase the athletic achievements or volunteer stories that took place there, guiding youth to

¹ LI Yan, SITU Shang-ji. (2001). A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE OF HONG KONG, MACAO AND ZHUJIANG DELTA. *Human Geography*, (01), 75-78.

² Henri Lefebvre. (2021). *The Production of Space*. (Li Chun Trans.). Beijing: The Commercial Press.

recall and reflect, thereby laying a mnemonic foundation for forging a strong sense of the Chinese national community.

Two, we can organize new events using existing venues, with a focus on uncovering symbols of national will. For example, based on the cross-border men's road cycling race—the only event that spanned all three regions—we can organize marathons or cycling events for youth, utilizing national landmarks like the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. By combining sportsmanship with the promotion of national infrastructure, we can enhance youth strong pride, identity, and belonging toward the Chinese nation.

Second, we should gradually construct a spiritual and cultural space that forges a strong sense of the Chinese national community through the National Games.

One, we must closely integrate the culture of the National Games with national policy interpretation. Emphasize that the Games are a vivid practice of integrating sports into national strategy, and highlight their real-world and era-specific significance in the context of the sports-power strategy. We should also explain how the advantages of the “one country, two systems” policy, the achievements of Greater Bay Area development, and the successes of reform and opening-up supported the hosting of the Games. Additionally, we should showcase the new development concepts demonstrated during the Games—such as coordination, openness, and shared participation.

Two, we must interpret the spirit of the National Games in conjunction with the spirit of Chinese sports. Highlight the embodiments of the Chinese sports spirit by athletes, volunteers, and referees. We can organize youth to learn and inherit Lingnan cultural elements—such as Cantonese opera, lion dancing, Yingge dance, and Hong Kong pop music—that were featured in the opening and closing ceremonies. This will help cultivate cultural confidence and construct a spiritual and cultural space for the Chinese nation in the post-Games era.

3.2 Media Dimension

A strong sense of the Chinese national community does not naturally form in people's

minds.¹ Rather, it is gradually constructed through certain “media,” in accordance with the laws of human cognition, across history and reality.

In the information age, media is a key force in shaping cognition and constructing identity. In response to the relatively limited participation of Greater Bay Area youth in the National Games, we should take advantage of their diverse information channels and active thinking, innovate communication strategies, and enhance their depth of engagement.

First, we should adapt to media transformation trends and reconstruct narratives using language and formats that resonate with youth. By leveraging innovative media, we can create deep resonance between grand themes and individual emotions. For example, during the Games, youth in the Greater Bay Area used grassroots and popular language to reinterpret the mascots “Xiyangyang” and “Lerongrong,” nicknaming them the “Greater Bay Chicken.” This shifted the role of youth from passive recipients to active disseminators, expanding the scope of publicity coverage and indirectly increasing their engagement.

In the post-Games era, if such harmless “meme culture” can be guided properly, the symbolic meaning of the mascots can spread more widely, deeply, and enduringly, becoming part of the collective memory of Greater Bay Area youth and the Chinese nation, thereby solidifying their emotional identity.

Second, a clear historical memory is the premise for media innovation. Archival resources serve as media and tools for constructing collective memory of the Chinese nation and play an important role in enhancing young people's sense of national identity.

The archives of the 15th National Games objectively record the successful experience of co-hosting the event and showcase the new face of Greater Bay Area development. We should use these archives, supported by national archival institutions, to collect, activate, and exhibit these archival resources through

¹ Li Qingwen. (2025). Logical levels and practical paths for integrating the forging of a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation into ideological and political courses in universities—Based on the cognitive-emotional-action analysis framework. *Journal of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University (Social Science Edition)*, 1-8[2025-11-01]. <https://link.cnki.net/urlid/33.1338.TS.20251011.1045.020>.

compilation, exhibitions, and media dissemination, evoking emotional resonance among youth.

One, we should establish a dedicated archive for the 15th National Games. Drawing on the successful experience of the “Beijing Winter Olympics Archive Collection,” we should launch a “15th National Games Memory Collection Program,” with coordinated efforts to collect, organize, open, and utilize archives from the bidding, preparation, hosting, and post-Games operation periods. This will enhance the integrity and diversity of the Games’ memory and help build a “Passionate National Games, Dynamic Greater Bay Area” sports memory.

Two, we should build a youth archive database for the Greater Bay Area, collecting and preserving digital records of youth participation in the Games. This should include not only their athletic achievements but also the stories of volunteers and service teams, enriching the national sports and youth cultural heritage repository.

3.3 Social Interaction Dimension

A strong sense of the Chinese national community is also constructed through social interaction.¹ Ultimately, the goal of using the National Games to strengthen this sense among youth is to encourage them, under the influence of collective memory and emotional identity, to practice the shared norms and values, and to engage in sustained, deep, and positive social interaction and collective action.

One, we should use the Games as an opportunity to guide youth in the Greater Bay Area to participate in building China into a sports powerhouse. We can regularly organize cross-regional sports events. In addition to team sports like dragon boat and rowing that were popular during the Games, we can also include easier-to-organize and low-threshold activities like jump rope and shuttlecock, expanding the scope of youth participation. This will revive the collective memory of cooperation during the Games and deepen mutual understanding among youth from the three regions under the shared goal of a sports powerhouse.

Two, we should use the volunteer service legacy

of the Games as a platform for youth to realize social value. Building on the “Little Dolphin” volunteer team, we can establish a “Dynamic Greater Bay Area Youth Volunteer Corps.” Inspired by the volunteer spirit of the Games, youth can participate in public sports services, transforming superficial interpersonal connections into deep empathy and shared value recognition. This will allow the volunteer culture formed during the Games to continue, innovate, and deepen in the post-Games era, becoming a solid bond for consensus-building and community identity among Greater Bay Area youth.

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