

# Group Consciousness Perspective: An Interpretation of Chinese National Community Consciousness

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**Abstract:** *Group norms, group goals, group feelings and group affiliation are indispensable elements for the group consciousness. Is Chinese national community consciousness a group consciousness? Combined with the connotation of the national community consciousness given in the official documents, in this article, I try to interpret the consciousness around the four necessary elements mentioned above and give an answer to this question. I find that the formation of the national community consciousness not only conforms to the general law of human consciousness activity and the characteristics of its psychological development stage, but also necessarily follows the general laws and characteristics of the formation of group consciousness, which is specifically manifested in the satisfaction of the four elements mentioned above by the group members in the formation of their consciousness.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese nation; The sense of community of the Chinese nation; Group consciousness*

## 1. Introduction

At present, China's development is currently facing with the dual influence of the inner social transformation and an advancing globalization trends. On the one hand, socio-economic structure, cultural ideology, etc. have been impacted to varying degrees, and coupled with the influence of information technology, spatial barriers to the exchange of ideas between people around the world are reduced. people's thoughts, culture, values, etc. are vulnerable to be influenced by ideological trends and cultures from the worldwide, inevitably there will be some negative mindsets, like "group lost", "class decline"; On the other hand, the whole concept of Chinese society and unity has become more and more important, and the consciousness of building a strong Chinese nation community has been raised to an unprecedented strategic height. People who are deeply involved in various trends of thought and the flood of information are easily held hostage by various ideas. The large amount of uncertain information will leave people's identity in conflict and confusion, further affecting their identity with their own country and creating an "individual identity crisis"; And at the national level, the weak national belief and national consciousness of ordinary people, including young people, threatens the stability of the region and the long-term stability of the country.

In the face of the complex situation at home and abroad, the proposal of casting a firm sense of Chinese national community undoubtedly has an important national strategic significance in stabilizing and uniting people's hearts and promoting national security, it is not only an inevitable requirement for the people of all ethnic groups to achieve the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, but also an inevitable requirement to respond to and effectively resist the infiltration of various extremist and separatist ideologies, and it is more important to enhance social cohesion, build up a solid ideological Great Wall of national unity, the urgent need to safeguard national security, social stability and the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups.

The formation of Chinese national community consciousness requires consideration of both the inherent cultural identity of the members within the group, as well as the intrinsic laws and characteristics of its unique stage of development, and the effectiveness of cultivation vehicles such as government, schools, and official media in constructing and cultivating the group members and their consciousness. This study takes Chinese national community consciousness as the research object, and tries to interpret the connotation of Chinese national community consciousness from the process of group consciousness activities and its main constituents, in order to provide ideas for the cultivation of Chinese community consciousness of group members.

## 2. Elements of group consciousness and the process of conscious activity

Group consciousness can be simply understood as the shared consciousness of group members. What is the "shared consciousness of group members"? How does it relate to and differ from personal consciousness? And what does it have to do with group psychology? In psychology, consciousness is considered to be a unique form of mental reflection of human beings, "a reflection of the higher mental forms of the objective world by the human brain, including various mental processes such as perception and thinking". It is reflected in people's mental activity processes (perception, thinking, memory, emotional experience, etc.), psychological tendencies (motivation, needs, beliefs, ideals, values, etc.) and psychological characteristics (temperament, abilities, etc.). It is embodied in the process of people's psychological activities (perception, thinking, memory, emotional experience, etc.) and psychological tendencies (motivation, needs, beliefs, ideals, values, etc.) and psychological characteristics (temperament, ability, etc.), which regulates and influence People's Daily behaviors. From this we can see that people can have consciousness only when they have mental phenomena (reflections of the real world). According to the explanation of the Social Science Dictionary, group consciousness is a kind of psychological awareness, which is the result of self-categorization thinking of group members, the psychological state of psychologically attributing themselves to a group, and forming certain identification emotions, dependence emotions and helping behaviors among group members [1], it is the process of gradual convergence and convergence of individual consciousness of group members accompanied by the process of group formation [2]. In this way, group consciousness is based on individual consciousness, but it is not the superposition of individual consciousness, but the convergence and integration of individual consciousness, so it has the characteristics of integration and homogeneity compared with individual consciousness. Of course, individual consciousness contains group consciousness as well as non-group consciousness, so the formation of group consciousness has a solid foundation only when the level of individual consciousness is raised. Since consciousness is a unique form of reflection of human psychology, group consciousness is also a form of reflection of group psychology. Because group consciousness is the reflection of group to a certain social existence, it must be reflected by group psychology as the "intermediary", so we can regard group psychology as the primary form of group consciousness.

The above explanation of group consciousness from a psychological perspective shows that the sense of identity, belonging, dependence and helping behavior correspond to the cognitive processes, emotional-experiential processes and behavioral intentions (tendencies) of human psychological processes. Therefore, in the process of the group becoming a relational aggregate, group members seek a sense of belonging and identity for whatever purpose, the most important is they have their own cognitive understanding of group norms, some kind of group shared values or group goals. Of course, it may also be because group members perceive the attraction of their similarity with the typical members of the group and then they have identification. Along with the perception of "others" and the interpretation of environmental information, people will inevitably produce corresponding emotional and affective experiences, including the satisfaction of their own needs in the interaction with other group members, in addition to a sense of belonging to the group, mutual communication and collaboration or interdependence on the basis of common goals, and then produce a strong experience of community fate, that is, "we" feelings, which contribute to the sense of mutual dependence. Based on the sense of belonging, dependence and identity, "we" share group values, group goals and group norms, which gives "we" a sense of security and wholeness, and often showing consistency and solidarity in our behavioral intentions and behavior performance. Therefore, group members can "resonate psychologically and thus generate specific emotions and relationships of interdependence and mutual support", and the activities of members "interact with each other", thus forming "common values and norms" that govern the behavior of each member. [3] It is due to the sense of wholeness and a clear sense of boundaries described above that the group inevitably generates a sense of exclusion to varying degrees, i.e., an exclusive (sexual) mentality. Therefore, group consciousness has the characteristics of value convergence, sense of identity, belonging and exclusivity. Obviously, group norms, group goals, the more shared group feelings, the stronger the sense of belonging to the group, the stronger the cohesion of the group, the stronger the group consciousness, reflected in the attitudes and behavior of individual members, and the stronger its restraining effect. Of course, the cohesiveness or enhancement of group consciousness will also enhance the individual's identification with the group, which is a two-way interactive process.

In summary, group norms, group goals, group feelings and group affiliation are the indispensable elements of group consciousness. Among them, group norms are "recognized by group members and need to jointly comply with the code of conduct, the formation of its imitation, implication, obedience

and other psychological factors"[4], the broad sense of group norms include social institutions, laws, ordinances and other explicit guidelines, but also includes the long-term social life gradually formed in the morality, customs, beliefs. It also includes morals, customs, beliefs, etc., which are gradually formed in the long-term social life and play the role of restraining people's behavior. Group goal is "the goal of group activities pursued through group action. The group goal is "the goal of group activities pursued through group action. The goal is an ideal situation which is recognized and expected by the group members. It is also the basic reason for the survival and development of the group, and it can promote the formation and development of group cohesion." [5] Group feelings refer to the personal feelings generated by the collaboration and communication among group members, as well as the "we" feelings generated by the integration of the subjective realm of the group members. In other words, the process of interaction and communication among people of all ethnic groups in the country forms the feeling that "we" are part of the Chinese family.

Group belonging consciousness refers to a sense of identity that all members get a certain degree of demand satisfaction from group activities and thus have for the group. These elements and their contents are both the content components of group consciousness and the objects or objects of group consciousness. As objects, they are "digested", "absorbed" or internalized through the mental processes of group members' cognitive, emotional and affective experiences and behavioral intentions, which reflect the group's consciousness activities. The special emphasis here is on group members rather than independent individuals, because although the cognitive laws of group members also follow the individual cognitive laws and individual psychological development laws in the micro field of individual psychology, because group consciousness arises as a result of group members' interaction with each other or with the environment and situations under specific historical, political, economic, and cultural conditions, therefore, their cognition, emotional and affective experiences, and behavioral willingness (tendencies) have the characteristics of group and socialization. In addition, from the vertical level of group consciousness activities, the social psychological process under certain historical conditions is also affected by the social unconscious. This is because group consciousness, as a part of social consciousness, regulates the activities of group members by means of group norms. Group norms are gradually formed under the influence of group values, group goals, group member characteristics and other factors in a specific social context. Because these norms reflect the social consciousness of group members as subjects, this consciousness is eventually fixed again in the form of morality, ideology, law, etc. As Wang Xue-ting et al. (2019) mentioned in their article, when group norms "are forced on people as some alien force and people feel repressed, it is still a definite social consciousness; when it is accepted by people from their heart and internalized as part of their spiritual world, it will become a social unconscious. This kind of unconsciousness is the result of long-term conscious activities of human beings, without any a priori coloring, and for individuals, it is unconsciously accepted by man, as if it becomes second nature to him".[6]

### **3. Chinese National Community Consciousness in the Perspective of Group Consciousness**

Chinese national community consciousness is simply understood as the consciousness of the Chinese national community, which takes the identification with the great motherland, the Chinese nation, Chinese culture, the Communist Organization of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics as its core content and realization path. And the Chinese national community refers to the cultural inclusiveness, economic interdependence, and emotional closeness of the people of all ethnic groups in China formed during their long-term historical development, a national community in which you have me, I have you, and no one can be separated from anyone, a community of destiny based on common historical conditions, common value pursuit, common material foundation, common identity, and common spiritual home[7]. The ethnic group here is the concept of a unified collection of ethnic groups, including the 56 ethnic groups of China, in the national sense, i.e., the national ethnic group. Obviously, the Chinese national community, at the national level, is a multi-ethnic complex with Chinese historical and cultural ties, stable economic activity characteristics and psychological qualities formed in China, and is a unified collection of geographic, consanguineous and spiritual community.

The formation of a group is accompanied by the emergence of group consciousness, and similarly the formation of the Chinese national community must also be accompanied by the formation of the Chinese national community consciousness. This means that the elements of group norms, group goals and feelings, and sense of belonging, which are common to the Chinese people as a community, should be gradually possessed in the process. Therefore, in terms of the content of its constituent elements, the national political system and its supporting policy system, the legal (regulation) system, the official documents explicitly stipulated in the socialist core values and other traditional customs and moral

norms formed on the basis of common historical memory and shared traditional culture are the categories of group norms. In this sense, the Chinese national community consciousness has political and cultural attributes, among which, the core socialist values are the value consensus and guidance of behavior norms for all ethnic groups in the country. National unity and stability, peaceful reunification, social and economic development, harmonious coexistence and common prosperity of ethnic groups, and people's aspiration and pursuit of a better life are the common ideals and goals of all ethnic groups in the country, all of which belong to the components of the group goals in the sense of Chinese national community. In the emotional level, "you have me, I have you" like "pomegranate seeds embracing together", the cohesion, interdependence, "breathing together, sharing the same fate" emotion is the common emotional home of people of all nationalities, reflecting the group feelings of people of all nationalities and the sense of belonging to the group.

The formation of Chinese national community consciousness is reflected in the cognitive understanding, emotional identification, behavioral willingness and performance of the people of all ethnic groups of the country on what is the Chinese national community and how to view it. The process of its formation follows the general pattern of the process of group consciousness activity. At the level of cognitive understanding, it focuses on the understanding and answers of all ethnic groups to a series of questions about the Chinese national community, including rational thinking and description of a series of macro and micro issues in the political, economic, cultural, and social aspects of the "Chinese national community". This description includes, at the macro level, the understanding and interpretation of the political and economic system of the state and its supporting policy system, of Chinese culture and the development of Chinese history, of the life of the people and the character of the nation by the people of all ethnic groups and their members. At the medium and micro levels, it is the knowledge and understanding of the history and current situation of the development of the peoples, their ethnic characteristics, cultural features and customs, which all belong to the scope of the knowledge system of the Chinese national community and can also be understood as the object of the group consciousness and the content composition of the group consciousness of the Chinese national community. With the support and guarantee of the national political and economic system, the above-mentioned knowledge is conveyed to members of all ethnic groups in the form of political culture (moral norms, laws and regulations and other policy systems, socialist core values, etc.), folk culture, academic research results, etc. through the intermediaries of official institutions, social media, education system, families and other parties as knowledge carriers, and finally "forms the basic knowledge literacy of all ethnic groups in a rational and conscious manner" and becomes an important cognitive schema of the national group. In terms of emotions, the process of acquiring and cognizing the economic system, political culture, historical origins and cultural patterns of the country is inevitably accompanied by real-life experiences that give rise to positive or negative experiences and feelings about whether "we" belong to the country, whether we feel safe, whether we feel fair, and whether we love it. A typical example is when people of all ethnic groups face a certain historical event or task, such as the global epidemic, and the people of the country unite to fight the epidemic and eventually bring peace to the nation, a kind of "we" feeling of "breathing together, sharing the same fate" and interdependence is born. The cohesiveness of the Chinese nation in the new era has also been enhanced as never before. The process of enhancing the cohesiveness of the members of the group (all peoples of the country) who are bound together by common norms to achieve the goals of the group (common goals) is a typical manifestation of emotional homogeneity, co-infection, emotional belonging and mutual dependence at the level of group consciousness activities. And the will (tendency) of behavior of the Chinese national community consciousness represents the common expectation and practical will of all ethnic groups. At the medium and micro levels, it represents the aspiration and pursuit of a better life of all ethnic groups in the country, and at the macro level of the country, it represents the common will of all ethnic groups in the country for social harmony and justice, and for the realization and maintenance of the peaceful reunification, prosperity and strength of the country. Leading with socialist core values is not only necessary to meet the present need to resolve the conflict of multiple values, but also the ideological foundation and value leadership to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the future. It is the theoretical innovation of Marxist theory combined with the real needs of China, and is the crystallization of the wisdom of the people of all ethnic groups, guiding their behavior will and social practice activities. Specifically, "the top-level design at the national level is a program for the realization of the will to act, capable of achieving the purpose of action of the Chinese nation. In the direction of expectation, the sense of community is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation". "In terms of practical solutions, community consciousness means having a scientific planning line and a feasible policy system. The Chinese national community consciousness is, in the end, the practical wisdom of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, the concrete operationalization of institutional design and value beliefs, embodied with the help of the

overall national planning, guidelines and policy system, and only with this part can the community consciousness truly sustain the community itself." [8]

#### 4. Conclusion

Obviously, the formation of the Chinese national community consciousness is to build a modern Chinese national state. This process reflects the identification of all ethnic groups with the national political system of the People's Republic of China, and is also "accompanied by the process of constructing the Chinese nation from a self-contained group to a conscious group", which is manifested in the "integration of ethnic groups into a national community and the generation of national emotions and national consciousness"[9]. Under the shell guarantee of the gradual improvement of the national supporting political system, it is a top priority to harmonize the social interests of various ethnic groups and members of various groups within the community. How each ethnic group views its own interests and the interests of others must be influenced by their respective regional/regional development, historical and cultural memory, religious beliefs, and living customs, etc. This conflict, which manifests itself in different interests, reflects the conflict of culture and values among different ethnic groups. Therefore, the formation of Chinese national community consciousness of each ethnic group requires the exploration of realistic paths in terms of the subject of group consciousness (group members), group norms and feelings (important contents of group consciousness) and the process of consciousness activities (internalization process of group contents).

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