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Psycho-Behavioral Mechanisms of Ethnic Interaction, Exchange, and Integration in Tourism Spheres: A Mixed-Methods Study of Deyang and the Western Sichuan Ethnic Corridor

Wang Peng[1,2], Huangfu Zhengtong[3]*

1. Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou, Hainan, 570100, China;
2. College of Economics and Management, Northeast Agricultural University, Harbin, Heilongjiang, 150030, China
3. PioEntropy Academy, Xiamen, Fujian, 361015, China

Corresponding author: Huangfu Zhengtong, 3521580014@qq.com

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Abstract: Taking Deyang and the Western Sichuan Ethnic Corridor as its geographic setting, this study draws on ten publicly documented cases selected for regional relevance and continuity of source material. A retrospective multi-case process design is used to reconstruct each case along a four-link chain: field opportunity, interaction process, psychological turning point, and identity consolidation. The cases span post-disaster reconstruction, festival tourism, old-town commerce, enclave economy, vocational education, historical trade routes, urban ethnic commerce, archaeological heritage, and ethnic-unity program development. Findings show that mere co-presence evolves into emotional safety, reciprocal trust, a sense of gain, and shared memory only when sustained by joint tasks, cultural participation, shared benefits, and public services. The tourism field accordingly performs four functions—aggregation, transformation, amplification, and sedimentation. Cross-case comparison identifies five psychological entry points: post-disaster recovery, festival-based empathy, institutional collaboration, historical reciprocity, and cultural identification, through which interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups move from initial encounter toward mutual understanding, trust, and shared meaning.

KeyWords: Tourism Field; Ethnic Corridor; Process Coding; Psychological Change; Interaction, Exchange, and Integration among Ethnic Groups; Sense of Community

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Introduction and Literature Review

Interaction, exchange, and integration among ethnic groups are both the practical foundation of ethnic unity and shared development and a historical process through which the community of the Chinese nation is built. Hu and Hu (2011) argue that ethnic policy should advance integration and shared prosperity as a whole [1]. Hao (2019) identifies embedded social structures and community environments as the spatial basis for these three processes [2], while Wang (2018) places them and community identity within a single project of construction [3].

The tourism field places this relational process in a public space that is visible and participatory. Wu (2000), Jiang (2021),

and Guo (2013) show, respectively, from the perspectives of ethnic cultural tourism, intangible-heritage transmission, and spatial production, how tourism can turn cultural resources into shared experiences and social relations [4–6]. The focus here is therefore how co-presence becomes emotional security, reciprocal trust, and community identity through concrete activities.

Case research is well suited to tracing such continuity. Guan (2023) argues that comparisons within and across cases can turn empirical material into a process-based explanation [7]. The multi-case studies of Gao et al. (2019) and Chen and Song (2014) likewise show how cross-case comparison can identify combinations of conditions and their psychological consequences [8–9]. Accordingly, this study adopts a retrospective multi-case process design based on public sources: it reconstructs the event chain first and then compares psychological entry points, interaction nodes, and identity consolidation.

This study examines how co-presence in ten cases becomes psychological change through interaction and, in the tourism field, extends into durable relationships and shared meaning. The analysis follows the chain of "field opportunity—interaction process—psychological turning point—identity consolidation" and compares five mechanisms: post-disaster recovery, festival-based empathy, institutional collaboration, historical reciprocity, and cultural identification. The central argument is that tourism promotes the three processes when people from different ethnic groups do things together, share the gains, and develop shared memories.

1. Research Design and Process Coding

1.1 Case Selection and Material Organization

Ten cases were selected because their public sources were sufficiently continuous, their interethnic interaction processes could be reconstructed, and they bore geographical, institutional, industrial, historical, or cultural links to Deyang. The set covers post-disaster reconstruction in Wenchuan and Beichuan, Qiang intangible-heritage festivals in Maoxian, Songpan Ancient Town, the Deyang–Aba Enclave Economic Park, vocational education in Sichuan, the Songmao Ancient Route, Hui commerce in Deyang, Sanxingdui cultural symbols, and Deyang's ethnic-unity advancement programs. Selection followed three criteria: sources could be cross-checked, events could be ordered in time, and interaction could be connected to changes in relationships and identity expression. Key facts were drawn from government websites, central and provincial media, cultural-heritage institutions, education departments, ethnic-affairs agencies, and local public documents.

Materials were broken down into four linked questions: Where did participants encounter one another? What did they do together? What emotions and relational changes emerged in the interaction? How did those changes enter ongoing life through culture, interests, and institutions? This treatment keeps the analysis focused on the connection between events and meaning rather than on reproducing the language of reports.

1.2 Two-level Coding: "R/E/S/C/P+O/T/M/P"

The first layer retains the five mechanisms: R denotes residential mixing, E economic embeddedness, S social interaction, C shared culture, and P psychological identification. The second layer captures process: O denotes field opportunities—co-presence, shared spaces, and shared resources; T denotes interaction processes—joint tasks, everyday mutual help, festival participation, trade, educational cooperation, and public services; M denotes psychological turning points—security, pleasure, cultural empathy, reliability, a sense of competence, perceived benefits, feeling respected, and shared pride; P denotes identity consolidation—benefit-based identification, identity expression, and institutional recognition.

This coding scheme shifts the question from "what mechanism does a case contain?" to "how does psychological change occur?" The enclave park is coded not only as R1, E1/E4, S1, and P2, but also as O2 (co-production), T3 (joint training), M5 (a sense of competence and perceived benefits), and P2 (institutional recognition). The festival cases retain C2 while also recording O1 (co-presence), T2 (joint participation), M2 (pleasure and cultural empathy), and P1 (shared pride).

Each case was first reconstructed internally and then compared across cases. Within-case analysis arranged the material along "field opportunity—interaction process—psychological turning point—identity consolidation"; the comparison then looked for shared nodes, distinctive entry points, and their enabling conditions. Source triangulation was used to confirm events, timing, and participants, while psychological coding interpreted changes in emotion and relationships. A slogan in a single report was not treated as an individual psychological outcome.

Table 1 Process Coding Framework and Analytical Questions

Coding layer	Code	Meaning	Analytical question
Structural layer	R/E/S/C/P	Five-dimensional mechanisms of residence, economy, society, culture, and psychology	What stable structures exist in the field
Opportunity layer	O1/O2/O3	Co-presence, shared spaces, and shared resources	How do different ethnic groups enter the same field
Interaction layer	T1/T2/T3/T4	Joint tasks, festival participation, reciprocal trade, and education/service cooperation	What do they do together
Psychological layer	M1–M7	Security, pleasure, empathy, reliability, competence, perceived benefits, and shared pride	How do emotions and relationships change
Consolidation layer	P1/P2/P3	Identity expression, institutional recognition, and benefit-based identification	How does experience enter the community narrative

2. Case Process Analysis

2.1 Post-disaster Recovery: From Disruption and Trauma to Security and Re-established Belonging

Post-disaster recovery first addressed whether everyday life could become stable again. Relief and reconstruction brought people from different regions and ethnic groups into the disaster zone. Roads, housing, schools, hospitals, and villages reappeared through resettlement, construction, education, and daily care; residents also saw strangers willing to stay and work alongside them. “When one place is in trouble, help comes from everywhere” thus moved from a grand statement into a concrete relationship. The affected population gradually shifted from the isolation of “I have lost my home” toward the companionship and trust captured in “someone is rebuilding with me.”

After the whole villages of Zhitai and Muti moved to Qionglai, resettlement still had to answer the question, “Is this place home?” The new site retained aspects of the original ecological setting; intangible-heritage workshops, the Qiang Art Troupe of Qionglai, oral-epic classes, and Qiang song and dance carried cultural identity forward. Blueberry farms, homestays, and Qiang-village tourism also made residents operators and cultural narrators. Maintaining Qiang culture and gaining access to the opportunities of the Chengdu Plain proceeded together. “Where the heart is at peace, there is home” captures the overlap of ethnic identity, attachment to the resettlement site, and state support within one lived experience.

Beichuan New County carried the recovery into the domain of urban memory. The old county seat preserves what was lost; the new county carries everyday life. The Qiang Museum, Banacha Commercial Street, Qiang architectural forms, and earthquake memorial spaces place Qiang culture, state-led reconstruction, and the memory of resistance to disaster along one urban axis. Residents shop, work, and celebrate in the new neighborhoods, while visitors encounter Qiang culture and the history of disaster relief in the same space. Trauma becomes shared memory, and “New Beichuan residents” becomes a psychological position from which a life order and a common future can be rebuilt.

2.2 Festival Empathy: From Watching Others to Celebrating Together

The Walerzu Festival, Qiang New Year, and China Ancient Qiang City in Maoxian show how a festival changes cultural psychology once it enters the tourism field. A county-wide festival format, immersive local experiences, and participation across ethnic groups brought Tibetan, Qiang, Han, and Hui residents together to prepare ritual food, watch performances, join the Salang dance, and gather around the bonfire. The emotional movement ran from unfamiliarity and curiosity to ease and pleasure in a shared rhythm, and then to respect formed through others’ skills, songs, and stories. The festival thus moved from an internal group ritual to the embodied experience of “celebrating together.”

China Ancient Qiang City extends this feeling. Its museum, transmission center, Qiang cultural square, Qiang King’s Stockade, and immersive night tour place historical legends, intangible techniques, and modern tourism on one experiential route. Visitors have time to encounter Qiang culture, while Qiang residents enter the tourism space as inheritors, performers, operators, and narrators. Being respected, being seen, and gaining opportunities from culture allow cultural confidence and

community identity to be sustained together.

Songpan Ancient Town draws its emotional force from long-term reciprocity. The tea-horse trade brought Han, Tibetan, Qiang, and Hui merchants and residents into repeated contact in markets, post stations, inns, religious sites, and streets. The exchange of goods gradually produced judgments about whether others could be relied upon; shared lodging, meals, and festivals turned reliability into neighborhood familiarity. Han–Hui marriages, the coexistence of multiple religious sites, and shared celebrations of the Tibetan New Year, Qiang New Year, and Eid al-Adha show that historical co-residence reached into kinship, food, and affect. Today, the Ethnic Unity Story Street translates these relationships into public memory that visitors can walk through, read, and imagine.

2.3 Institutional Collaboration: Competence, Trust, and Responsibility

The resources of Aba, Deyang's technology, the park's infrastructure, and its tax-sharing arrangement were placed within a single industrial chain. Officials deliberate together, workers produce together, and public-service counters address everyday problems jointly; exhibition halls and road names place memories of the two areas in the same urban space. Qiang youth He Jianxiong rose from an ordinary worker to a lithium-carbonate workshop supervisor. His career made "I was not only helped; I can also create value" a concrete feeling. "One family, one heart, one effort" expresses the convergence of competence, benefits, and emotion.

Sichuan's 9+3 free vocational education program and inland ethnic-minority classes place psychological change within youth development. Students arriving in Deyang may fall silent because of Mandarin, everyday habits, or family finances; paired support, mixed boarding, clubs, basketball leagues, and Yi New Year bonfire events provide repeated opportunities for contact. Shared learning makes differences understandable, shared competition makes ability visible, and shared life makes asking for help and helping others ordinary. Qiu Wuge's path from a student from Liangshan to a teacher in Deyang marks a shift from "the person receiving an opportunity" to "the person passing an opportunity on." "Represent Liangshan and tell the Deyang story well" extends a personal experience into responsibility for a shared community across regions.

Deyang's ethnic-unity advancement programs extend institutional collaboration into industry, health care, education, and community life. The halal canteen, family-doctor services, and fee reductions for disadvantaged patients at the Shifang Ethnic Hospital answer immediate needs; education practice bases and paired assistance offer longer-term opportunities; the De–A Industrial Park exhibition hall and ethnic-unity roads provide shared public spaces of recognition. Scattered experiences of fairness, opportunity, and being seen become a shared expression once they receive institutional form.

2.4 Historical Reciprocity: From Exchange to Everyday Warmth

The Songmao Ancient Route reveals the emotional foundation of economic embeddedness. Hui inns, Han trading houses, Tibetan merchants, Qiang residents, and military families depended on one another along long journeys. Tea, cloth, ironware, grain, hides, and medicinal materials crossed ethnic boundaries; inns and post stations extended trade into food, lodging, and information exchange. The same bowl of tea, object, and road appeared again and again, becoming ordinary symbols of shared life. Repeated fulfillment of commitments and mutual care produced the expectation that "the other side will return, keep its word, and help."

Xiaoquan, Luoshui, and Tingjiang communities in Deyang bring this historical reciprocity into urban life. Guozhi beef and halal restaurants form a market shared by residents of different ethnic groups; halal beef zongzi are exchanged among neighbors at the Dragon Boat Festival; the halal canteen and direct medical transport at the ethnic hospital make Hui residents feel respected when seeking care. Community care for older people, employment in halal food businesses, economic exchange, and public services support one another. Difference is not erased; it is organized within common life. People retain their dietary practices and beliefs while looking after one another on the same street, in the same hospital, and at the same festival.

2.5 Cultural Identification: From Shared Viewing to Shared Pride

The psychological force of Sanxingdui's cultural symbols lies in the simultaneous presence of local distinctiveness and a shared Chinese civilization. Visitors first encounter bronze masks, the bronze tree, dragons, jade tablets, and ritual objects with shock and curiosity. Archaeological interpretation then explains their links with the Central Plains, the Yangtze basin,

and other regions, turning local astonishment into understanding. When the creativity of the ancient Shu civilization is shown together with its historical participation in exchanges within Chinese civilization, local pride acquires a shared-civilizational direction. The museum turns archaeological knowledge into a shared emotion that can be seen, learned, and discussed.

Case 10 connects cultural identification with institutional identification. Industrial, health-care, educational, and community programs bring community identity into familiar settings. Honors and model units are no longer external labels; they publicly confirm "what we have done together": building parks, serving patients, educating students, and maintaining communities. Institutional recognition makes personal warmth publicly visible and gives members of different ethnic groups a common name under which to describe their contributions.

3. Cross-case Comparison: Psychological Mechanisms and the Role of the Tourism Field

3.1 Psychological Entry Points Across Five Case Types

The five case types differ first in their psychological entry points. Post-disaster recovery begins with security and gratitude; festival empathy opens relations through pleasure and cultural empathy; institutional collaboration advances through competence, perceived benefits, and responsibility; historical reciprocity accumulates through reliability and everyday warmth; cultural identification rests on shared pride and public recognition. These types are analytical tools generated through cross-case comparison, not mutually exclusive categories. A case may contain several mechanisms, although one entry point is usually more prominent.

Table 2 Structural Coding and Psychological Turning Points across Ten Cases

Case	R/E/S/C/P	Field opportunity O	Interaction process T	Psychological turning M	Identity consolidation
C1	R1/E4/S1/C3/P3	Post-disaster relief, resettlement, tourism operations	Reconstruction, pairing, co-residence	Security, gratitude, belonging	Benefit-based identification
C2	R1/E4/S1/C3/P3	New town, museum, memorial spaces	Co-residence, consumption, festivals, memory transmission	Trauma repair, cultural pride	Benefit-based identification
C3	R1/E2/S2/C2/P1	Festivals, China Ancient Qiang City, visitor flows	Joint preparation, joint performance, joint dancing, shared benefits	Pleasure, curiosity, cultural empathy	Identity expression
C4	R2/E2/S2/C2/P1	Old town, tea-horse trade, story street	Trade, lodging, festivals, intermarriage	Reliability, reciprocity, historical empathy	Identity expression
C5	R1/E1/E4/S1/C2/P2	Enclave industrial chain, shared benefits	Joint production, joint deliberation, training, services	Competence, perceived benefits, trust	Institutional recognition
C6	R1/E3/S2/C3/P3	School, ethnic-minority classes, employment pathway	Joint learning, shared residence, competition, pairing	Acceptance, growth, gratitude, responsibility	Benefit-based identification
C7	R2/E2/S2/C2/P1	Ancient route, post stations, tea-horse network	Trade, lodging, meals, information exchange	Reliability, dependence, mutual help	Identity expression
C8	R2/E2/S3/C2/P2	Old town, food service, community, hospital	Consumption, employment, reciprocal gifting, services	Feeling respected, warmth, mutual help	Institutional recognition
C9	R3/E1/S2/C1/P1	Archaeological site, museum, archaeological communication	Shared viewing, learning, interpretation	Respect, shared pride	Identity expression
C10	R1/E1/E3/S1/S3/C2/C3/P2	Industry, health care, education, community	Shared services, joint creation, joint communication	Fairness, being seen, public recognition	Institutional recognition

3.2 A Common Psychological Chain from Encounter to Mutual Understanding

Across the cases, psychological change follows an order. Co-presence first brings members of different ethnic groups into the same field of vision. Joint tasks, public services, and institutional rules then reduce the fear of exclusion and create

interactional safety. Language, festivals, food, history, and archaeological symbols make one another's lifeworlds intelligible. Trade, work, study, rescue, and service next test whether others are reliable while giving individuals a sense of competence and access to help; reciprocal trust is formed at this stage. Only afterward can personal experiences be placed within shared narratives of earthquake relief, the ethnic corridor, Chinese civilization, and ethnic-unity programs, generating shared pride and responsibility.

The chain is supported by emotional language found in the cases: "Where the heart is at peace, there is home" in post-disaster reconstruction; "one family, one heart, one effort" in the De–A park; "like pomegranate seeds held tightly together" at the Maoxian festival; "tell the Deyang story well" in the education case; and the shared pride in the plurality and unity of Chinese civilization expressed in the Sanxingdui exhibition. These expressions turn institutions and activities into psychological facts that participants can feel, and show that the depth of the three processes must be confirmed through shared experience.

3.3 Four Functions of the Tourism Field

The four functions of the tourism field are not four parallel labels; they form a conversion sequence. Aggregation solves the problem of whether people can meet; transformation turns "seeing culture" into cooperation; amplification brings cultural difference into bodily experience and emotional resonance; sedimentation leaves the experience in continuing relationships and institutional memory. Festivals, scenic sites, old towns, and museums first bring residents, visitors, inheritors, service workers, and organizers into one space. Joint preparation, performance, service, learning, and operation then turn spectators into collaborators. Dance, food, historical remains, and archaeological objects carry the emotion, while intangible-heritage institutions, industrial cooperation, educational pathways, public services, and recognition programs preserve the shared experience.

3.4 Conditions for Transformation in the Tourism Field

Cross-case comparison also shows that the tourism field does not produce emotional transformation automatically. Cultural display can become cultural pride only when local residents can participate, narrate, and benefit. Shared consumption becomes reciprocal trust only when services are fair, language is accessible, and benefits are visible. Spatial embeddedness enters everyday interaction only when joint tasks and public services sustain it. The role of the tourism field, therefore, is to organize culture, services, industry, and education into practices that people from different ethnic groups complete together.

3.5 An Integrated Interpretation of the Deyang Field

Deyang lies north of the Chengdu Plain on the eastern edge of the Western Sichuan Ethnic Corridor. It inherits the historical trade relations of the Songmao route while carrying current links created by assistance to Aba, education for ethnic-minority regions, and ethnic-unity advancement programs. The ten cases form a connected narrative across time: the ancient route and Hui commerce in Xiaoquan leave a legacy of reciprocity; Sanxingdui supplies shared civilizational symbols; the De–A Industrial Park offers a space for shared development; vocational education opens a path for youth development; ethnic hospitals and communities provide everyday warmth; and model units turn these experiences into institutional recognition.

For Deyang, festivals, scenic sites, and museums should be designed as spaces of joint tasks, with clear roles for participants from different ethnic groups and visible arrangements for sharing benefits. Tourism services should also connect with communities, schools, industrial parks, and hospitals so that short encounters can extend into learning, employment, volunteering, and public-service relations. People's experiences of being moved and gaining from participation should enter stories, exhibitions, and educational activities, allowing the community narrative to grow from shared life. The EIIS can then track changes in tourism-space embeddedness, contact quality, cultural empathy, interethnic trust, the three processes, and community identity, forming an evaluation chain from activity to experience, relationship, and identity.

4. Conclusion

The central finding can be stated as a proposition: tourism fields promote the three processes not by the scale of spatial aggregation but by whether the psychological chain of joint tasks, emotional security, reciprocal verification, and institutional sedimentation is fully activated. This proposition advances the existing discussion in two respects. First, spatial embeddedness is a necessary but insufficient condition; without sustained joint tasks and public services, physical proximity does not automatically produce emotional ties. Second, by using seven-dimensional psychological coding (M1–M7), the

study breaks community identity down into observable emotional nodes—security, empathy, competence, perceived benefits, and shared pride—and shows that macro-level identification must sediment through micro-level emotional events rather than emerge directly from policy statements.

This study has limitations. All ten cases were retrospectively reconstructed from public documents, without in-depth interviews or participant observation with those involved. Coding of psychological turning points relies on emotional expressions in texts, so the narrative construction may diverge from lived experience. In addition, the retrospective design reconstructs historical contexts but does not follow comparable cases longitudinally over time.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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