

## Research on Macao Study Tour Policy and Cross-strait Cultural Construction on the Macao Local Government Cultural Industry—Taking the “Ten Thousand Persons Plan”

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**Abstract** The development of Macao's study tour policy is closely related to the cultural industry. Its evolution has enriched cultural experience, promoted exchanges, and driven the coordinated development of the cultural tourism industry from "national education" to "national education + tourism". This study uses intergroup contact theory to thematically analyze 28 respondents' views on cross-strait relations and cross-strait culture. The results show that the study tour can promote exchanges between young people in Mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR and Taiwan Region; it can also directly meet the ideal conditions for intergroup communication mentioned by Allport, and have a positive impact on mainstream ideology and national identity. However, the government can create a cross-strait study tour circle. This circle can provide a better platform for strengthening indirect contacts between different regions. It makes up for the lack of direct contact conditions (spatial distance). This study fills the gap in the literature on enhancing cultural integration, identity construction, and cultural policy impacts among cross-strait youth through study tours, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the cultural relations between mainland China, the Macao SAR, and Taiwan region.

**Keywords:** • cross-strait study tour • Ten Thousand Persons Plan • intergroup contact • youth integration • cultural industry

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## 1 Introduction

In today's era of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become increasingly important. Mutual interaction and mutual understanding between people from different regions and with different cultural backgrounds are of extremely far-reaching significance in promoting world peace and development. Intergroup contact theory provides a strong theoretical framework support for an in-depth understanding of the interactive behavior between different groups. It also provides a new theoretical basis for the development of cross-strait relations. This study takes the "Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan" population ageing special summer camp as an example to deeply explore the key role played by the government in promoting cross-cultural exchanges. This summer camp is one of the exchange programs in the 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan'. Since the study's small sample size may limit generalisation, this research will focus on "Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan" population ageing special summer camp. This study will address concerns about sample size and representativeness using qualitative data from program participants' interviews and reflective essays. These findings on cross-strait cultural identity and interaction are valuable, but the study's 28 participants limit generalisation. For greater applicability, future research should use larger and more diverse samples.

The Macau government stated that the cultural industry will drive industrial development through cultural tourism. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism's "14th Five-Year Plan" Cultural Industry Development Plan makes it very evident that study tour should be actively pursued. Study tours and other forms of cultural exchange have emerged as crucial tools for fostering intercultural dialogue and the growth of the cultural industries. Cultural exchanges between the two sides of the cross-strait started as soon as the 38-year isolation between them was lifted in 1987. In Taierzhuang, Zaozhuang, and Shandong, the first "Cross-Strait Exchange Base" was founded in 2009. Since then, 24 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions on the Chinese mainland have established 91 cross-strait exchange bases (People's Daily Online, 2023). In 2017, Xiamen (Jimei) became the first study tour base in Fujian and Taiwan in mainland China (China Taiwan Net, 2021). During the Second Session of the 13th National People's Congress in March 2019, General Secretary Xi Jinping made the following observation while taking part in the discussions of the Fujian delegation: "It is necessary to strengthen cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, increase cultural exchanges, and enhance Taiwan compatriots' understanding of the nation and the country. and emotions" (Xinhua Net, 2019). The "Recommendations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-term Goals for 2035" were reviewed and approved by the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee in 2020. The proposal suggested supporting Fujian in investigating

new avenues for cross-strait integrated development and bolstering cross-strait grassroots and youth exchanges (Xinhua News Agency, 2021). The report of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2022 stated that "we will continue to be committed to promoting cross-strait economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, and promote the joint promotion of Chinese culture on both sides of the cross-strait" (Xinhua News Agency, 2022)." The People's Republic of China's Patriotism Education Law was examined and approved by the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress at its Sixth Meeting on October 24, 2023. The law went into effect on January 1, 2024 (Xinhua News Agency, 2023). This law, which is very important to China, uses the rule of law to support and safeguard patriotic education in the modern era. The law, which states that the state should implement "one country, two systems" practical education as well as historical and cultural education, incorporates patriotic education into the national education system. It also emphasizes patriotic education for children and teenagers in families, schools, and other settings. Simultaneously, special rules have been put in place regarding the use of cultural heritage, red cultural resources, patriotic education bases, and cultural venues for patriotic education. The law also emphasizes that in order to fully realize the great cause of reunification of the motherland, it is necessary to enhance the patriotic awareness and mutual understanding of compatriots in Taiwan Region, the Hong Kong SAR, and the Macao SAR. This law reflects the new understanding of patriotic education by the people across the country. One of the important strategies to promote cross-strait cultural exchanges is tourism education.

The development of Macao's study tour policy was mainly after the handover, and its rules were implemented in line with the country's education policy; the evolution of the study tour policy was logically guided by the needs of national education. The development process of Macao's study tour policy: from cultural experience exchange camps to study tours, and from study tours to enriching the connotation of Macao's world tourism and leisure center. From the perspective of the functionality of the policy, it has gradually evolved from the nature of "national education" (The Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, 2001) to the nature of "national education + tourism" (China Culture News, 2023; Macau Daily, 2024). The development of Macao's study tour policy is closely related to the cultural industry. Its evolution has enriched the forms of cultural experience, promoted cultural exchanges, and provided opportunities for the development of the cultural industry. The change from "national education" to "national education + tourism" has also driven the coordinated development of related cultural tourism and other industries.

The development of Macao's cultural industry can be roughly divided into three stages: the introduction of the concept for the cultural industry (2000–2009), the

preparation of policies (2010–2019), and the adjustment of policies (2020 to the present) (Xiang, Cui, & Xu 2018). Macao's cultural industry policy should promote the development of Macao's cultural industry through fiscal and taxation financial policies, talent policies, and land policies (Lam & Li, 2022). The "Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" makes it very clear that it will help Macao leverage the advantages of the coexistence and long-term integration of diverse Eastern and Western cultures, and accelerate the development of cultural tourism and cultural industries. The document also proposed plans to strengthen youth exchanges between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao and conduct youth study tour. The Macao SAR Government released the "Cultural Industry Development Policy Framework" (2020–2024), which defines the "cultural industry" as the application of innovation and intellectual property rights to generate products with cultural content, offer pertinent services and experiences, generate wealth and job opportunities, and engage in economic endeavors that advance the enhancement of the general living environment. Macau's cultural industry will be driven by the development of cultural tourism, cultural trade, cultural technology, etc. The spatial layout will take Macau's World Heritage as the main carrier and the central cultural core of the Macau Peninsula with historical culture as the core. Macau-Hengqin, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the Belt and Road Initiative have formed a circle with the theme of the integration of culture and tourism to strengthen interconnection and interaction between regions and promote the development of Macau's cultural industry (Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2020). In cross-strait relations, Macao plays a more passive than an active "intermediary" role. Macao has the potential to leave an enduring historical legacy if it takes advantage of its unique circumstances and acts as a "window of location" for cross-strait dialogue and communication (He & Liu, 2006).

In mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR and Taiwan Region, can the study tour and exchange between young people be effective? Can the exchange base promote the interaction and integration between four youth groups? Study tours are one of the primary activities for cross-strait cultural exchanges and play a significant role in promoting cross-strait cultural exchanges. In fact, these exchange bases are also important platforms for cross-strait cultural cooperation and exchange. In this study, we use the 6th "Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan" Population Aging Special Summer Camp as an example, this article analyzes four youth groups using intergroup contact theory and investigates the study camp's function in cross-strait cultural exchanges. The purpose of this article is to discuss how the cultural industry can empower the construction of cross-strait study tour culture.

## 2 Literature review

Study tours and other cultural exchange programs are becoming important as a tool for governments to support cross-cultural exchanges and the development of cultural industries. The building of cross-strait study tour cultural circles can be facilitated by the cultural industry. Due to differences in economic development, systems, ideology and other factors, young people from mainland China and region of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan are prone to encounter prejudice in their interactions under the "one country, two systems" institutional framework. This not only hinders cross-strait cultural exchanges, but also poses challenges to the coordinated development of the cultural industry. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to conduct in-depth research on how to reduce prejudice and promote the harmonious development of cross-strait relations through 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan's cultural exchange programs.

The intergroup contact theory of Western social psychology provides us with a new research perspective. Western social psychology suggests that one strategy to effectively reduce intergroup prejudice is intergroup contact. What exactly is the contact effect of intergroup contact? According to Allport (1954), every brief interaction confirms our existing negative associations. Prejudice does not necessarily disappear with contact. Positive contact effects require the following four factors: intergroup collaboration, common goals, equal status between groups, and authoritative support. Due to cross-strait political reasons, cross-strait exchanges did not meet the requirements of authoritative support in intergroup contact theory. Subsequent studies have discovered that intergroup contact can still be beneficial even in the absence of the aforementioned four requirements. Intergroup communication has been demonstrated in existing situations to positively impact the integration of disparate groups. White sailors and Black sailors sailed at sea in a cooperative state after racial discrimination in the U.S. merchant marine was outlawed in 1948, developing stronger bonds and more positive racial views between them (Brophy, 1945). Deutsch and Collins (1951) found that compared with whites in segregated areas, whites in mixed areas were more willing to have in-depth cross-racial contact and they also had more positive racial attitudes.

Using the meta-analysis conducted by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) as an example, they discovered that the average correlation coefficient between intergroup contact and intergroup prejudice is -0.287 when the contact conditions are met and -0.204 when they are not. Zelig and Hendrickson (1933) believed that people's views of out-groups are influenced by their knowledge and understanding of that out-group. Ng, Kulik, and Bordia (2016) believed that intergroup contact helps groups find more commonalities and similarities, thereby promoting empathy and friendship, reducing prejudice, and improving intergroup relations. Study tours can satisfy the

views of Ng, Kulik et al. A few academics have also questioned whether interactions between different groups will be beneficial. If people pay too much attention to one group and ignore another, it may lead to negative effects, intergroup conflict, and concerns about "assimilation" (Forbes, 1997). In order to further improve the intergroup contact theory, Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp (1977) proposed the indirect intergroup contact theory. Furthermore, studies have been conducted that have demonstrated the benefits of indirect intergroup contact (Tausch, Hewstone, Schmid, Hughes, & Cairns, 2011; Christ et al., 2011). Using intergroup contact as a theoretical framework, this study will critically examine whether the 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan' meets these conditions and how the lack of these conditions affects its ability to reduce prejudice among participants from different cultural backgrounds. Recent studies have shown that intergroup contact is beneficial without the four requirements. When Allport's criteria are not met, Pettigrew's meta-analysis found a weaker but still significant correlation between intergroup contact and prejudice. This study will investigate interactions without these conditions.

After three years of the epidemic, Taiwan Region and Mainland China have progressively enhanced their cultural relations. The 2023 Cross-Strait Youth Culture Month brought together approximately 1,500 young Taiwanese people to engage in activities related to intangible cultural heritage, calligraphy and painting, traditional Chinese medicine, and other related themes (Han, 2023). These activities included the 6th "Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan" Population Aging Special Summer Camp (Institute of Population Research, 2023), the 7th Cross-Strait Yue Fei Cultural Summer Camp, the 8th Chinese Cultural Heritage Research Camp, the 2023 Cross-Strait Archaeological Research Camp, the 12th Cross-Strait Cultural Heritage Protection Forum, and so on (Han, 2023). The main characteristics of cross-strait cultural exchanges are: first, study tours are one of the main forms; second, cultural exchange is the theme; third, the main participants are young people. Our research results support the 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan' to promote young people's understanding and respect for culture. This literature needs more detailed integration into the study, especially in how these theories affect cross-cultural empathy and identity formation program outcomes. While these are important cultural exchange events, the literature lacks an understanding of their long-term effects on intergroup relations and identity construction. This study, through the "Ten Thousand Persons Plan," examined cultural integration and intergroup empathy to bridge this gap. The theory of intergroup contact is used to optimize Macao's study tour policy, promote the in-depth integration of cross-strait cultures and the sustainable development of Macao's cultural industry. Positive contact effects require the following four factors: intergroup collaboration, common goals, equal status between groups, and authoritative support. However, in cross-strait exchanges, due to some political reasons, the fourth condition "authoritative support" is not met. So, how do we

solve this problem through study tours? 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan' can answer this question. Study tours are a useful way for the governments of Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, and Mainland China to improve communication between various groups and give them a forum for exchanges. From the perspective of collaboration conditions, study tours promote collaboration among young people across the cross-strait, meeting the first requirement of intergroup contact. It reduces group differences among young people across the cross-strait through cultural exchanges, which meets the second requirement in the theory. During the study tour, all students have equal status, fulfilling the third requirement. However, there are deficiencies in “authoritative support.”

## **2.1 The integration of young people from Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, and mainland China depends on the government's support of the growth of the cultural industries**

In the research field, relatively few studies have been conducted on the 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan'. In-depth research on it can comprehensively explore the construction of common cultural identity and how to influence cross-cultural emotional and behavioral responses. Our research shows that participants can enhance cognitive and emotional understanding and reduce inter-group bias, thereby cultivating cross-strait national and cultural identities.

If the government establishes "cultural circles", young people's cultural empathy and prejudice can be decreased (Q. Li, Li, & Xiong, 2022). If they have greater cultural confidence, people may experience less anxiety (Bi, Wu, & Zhao, 2022). Building trust is facilitated by the similarities between the Chinese cultures on both sides of the cross-strait (Chen, 2023). Cross-strait harmony may be aided by more mainland youth traveling to the Taiwan region (Pan, Wu, & Chang, 2020). This literature review proposes a critical evaluation of the 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan' to ascertain whether it achieves these goals in view of the political and cultural differences between region of Macau and Taiwan.

The literature suggests such initiatives are valuable, but their scalability and long-term viability are unknown. This study examines whether the 'Ten Thousand Persons Plan' affects cross-strait cultural construction and whether short-term exchanges change intergroup relations. Thus, cross-strait cultural exchanges can effectively lessen the intergroup prejudices held by Taiwanese youths, improve their cognitive understanding of the mainland and reshape cognition and evaluation; at the emotional level, they can lessen the anxiety that Taiwanese youths feel about other groups and foster intergroup empathy; at the behavioral level, they can investigate the shared identity characteristics of young people

across the cross-strait, seek to establish a sense of group belonging, and effectively strengthen their sense of one national identity. Eliminating intergroup prejudices, highlighting the shared cultural advantages of both sides of the cross-strait, and encouraging initiative amongst various groups on both sides of the cross-strait are all necessary and crucial tasks in the work of fully promoting cross-strait cultural exchanges. These tasks are essential to the integration and development of both sides.

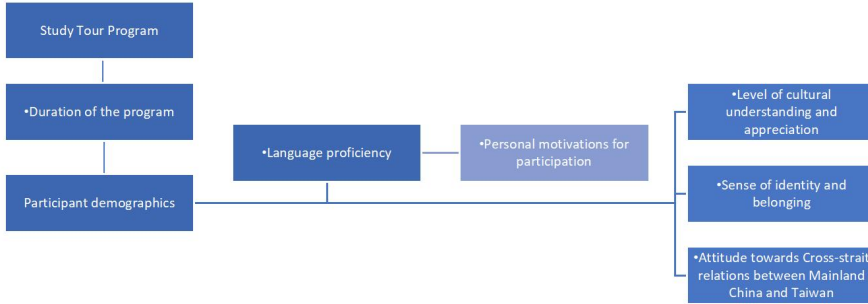
The 6th "Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan" Population Aging Project Summer Camp is one of the projects under the "Ten Thousand Persons Plan". The goal of the summer camp, which ran from July 1 to July 14, was to strengthen the foundation of a platform for university-to-university knowledge and experience exchange and to further the field of gerontological research in Macao, Hong Kong, and Taiwan Region through in-depth discussions and debates on ageing-related topics. The China Aging Development Research Center, the China Population Health and Development Research Center, and the Institute of Population Research of Peking University are hosting the summer camp, which is overseen by the Peking University Office for Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Region. Summer programs include online and offline activities. According to statistics from the Institute of Population Research (2023), a total of 77 students from 24 universities were accepted as offline campers, and more than 200 students from 86 universities were accepted as online campers. While eliminating prejudice among young people, the summer camp also enhances understanding between young people in the mainland, region of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

Although Macau's cultural industry has achieved certain results after extensive research, there is still room for improvement. Among them, people's understanding of the long-term impact of the "Ten Thousand People Plan" is quite limited. In particular, there are relatively few studies on the relationship between Macau and Taiwan. In view of this, this study will explore the impact of the plan on long-term cultural integration and identity formation based on intergroup contact theory. From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, studying the long-term and scalability of these initiatives is likely to provide useful references for policymakers and stakeholders in protecting culture. In order to fill the gap in the literature on identity, cultural integration and cultural policy effects in the “Ten Thousand Persons Plan”, this study introduces intergroup contact theory, which helps to understand the cultural connection between mainland China, region of Macau and Taiwan.

Based on the literature, we identified a few factors in Figure 1 for the research framework.



**Figure 1:** Research framework



The Chinese Ministry of Education launched the Ten Thousand Persons Plan, also known as the "Teacher and Student Exchange Plan for Universities, Secondary Schools and Primary Schools between Hong Kong, Macao and the Mainland," to encourage educational exchange and collaboration. The Ten Thousand Persons Plan promotes educational interaction outside Figure 1's Macao Special Administrative Region. The strategy spans secondary, primary, and university schools. Hong Kong, Macao, and Mainland China professors and students can exchange at their universities.

### 3 Research methodology

This study examines how the "Ten Thousand Persons Plan" affects Macao Study Tour Policy and Cross-Straits Cultural Construction. We investigate how region of Macao and Taiwanese students' perceptions and understanding of cross-strait cultures are impacted during study tour. The methodological framework ensures a comprehensive and rigorous assessment of the study's impact while addressing issues with sample representativeness and methodological clarity. We collect data in many ways to address our study questions:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with region of Macau and Taiwan students, teachers. We were conducted with government officials, program organizers and experts. These interviews explored participants' perspectives and experiences. This approach allowed us to flexibly explore its relevance to our research. Semistructured interviews can provide more detailed responses and meet the needs of the data collection process.

Focus Group: Macau and Taiwan students and teachers will discuss project impact, and share experiences. Compared to one-on-one interviews, moderators guarantee more interactive data.

To support primary data, we will analyze government policies, program reports, media briefings, and academic literature on cross-Strait cultural exchange and tourism policies. This approach contextualizes the material and validates program goals and achievements. Triangulation ensures data consistency during the process.

Our thematic analysis will identify key trends and themes from interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to assess the program’s impact on cross-strait cultural exchanges. This analysis will organize and interpret the data in order to fully study the program's effects. As requested, we will explain the steps for theme identification, categorisation, and reliability.

In addition to thematic analysis, a pre-and post-program comparative analysis will assess participants' views on cultural identity and cross-strait relations. We also triangulated interviews, focus groups, and document data for credibility and validity. Triangulation will strengthen our conclusions by comparing data from multiple perspectives.

Ethics: All participants gave their consent to participate in the study. Their privacy will be respected. As noted in the study, we will follow guidelines for human participants in research to ensure ethical conduct. We also ensure the validity and integrity of the research.

### **3.1 Variables and definitions for cross-strait cultural exchange study**

Our cross-strait cultural exchange study examines key Tour Programme criteria for understanding and rating. The curriculum promotes Macao-Taiwan cultural understanding through travel, immersion, and workshops. With this basis, the program's effects on participants and cross-strait culture are explored. Programme duration—the number of days or weeks participants spend on activities—is important. The length of study tour has a significant impact on the integration of young people from both sides of the cross-strait. A shorter study tour may not allow students enough time to gain in-depth exposure to the local culture. According to intergroup contact theory, appropriate study tour time can strengthen contact between young people and is very useful for mutual understanding and cultural integration. Demographics include region, age, gender, education, language, etc. We rely on the understanding and appreciation of culture before and after the project, as well as the display of empathy and respect for self-awareness. This variable measures cross-cultural understanding. After the session, participants' cultural identity and belonging in their own and other cultures are examined. Journaling, interviews, and reflection help us assess the program's self-esteem and cultural effects. Cross-strait relations opinions reflect past conflicts, current dynamics, and desired future trajectories between region of Macao and Taiwan.

### 3.1.1 Layout of the study

**Figure 2:** Flow chart



We evaluate the program's ability to foster nuanced and constructive cross-strait perspectives by comparing pre-and post-program attitudes.

Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien comfort are pragmatic variables. Language proficiency affects participants' communication, promoting or hindering intercultural engagement. Personal growth, cultural exploration, career development, and networking motivate program participation. Combined with intergroup contact theory, understanding participants' motivations is of great significance for us to grasp their expectations, participation levels, and project effects. Previous exposure to other cultures captured participants' diverse cultural experiences. According to intergroup contact theory, cross-cultural acceptance, project adaptability, and previous cultural contact effects can all be explained

through the study of this variable. We delve into these variables to better understand the complex dynamics involved in study tour programs and the actual realities of cross-strait cultural exchanges.

From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, in order to gain a deeper understanding of cross-strait cultural dynamics, we carefully analyzed the impact of the program on participants' cultural understanding, identity, attitudes, and experiences. Intergroup contact theory emphasizes that different groups can enhance mutual understanding, reduce prejudice, and promote cultural integration through contact. In this study, we focus on participants' motivations and their prior cultural exposure experiences. These factors will affect the way they contact and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds during the study tour, thereby affecting their understanding of cross-strait cultures. Through research on these aspects, we can more fully understand the mechanism and practical effects of study tour programs in promoting cross-strait cultural exchanges, and provide strong theoretical support and a practical basis for further optimizing and promoting cross-strait cultural exchanges.

It studies how the "Ten Thousand Persons Plan" influences the Macao Study Tour Policy and cross-strait cultural construction, concentrating on Macao and Taiwanese students' cultural impressions and enjoyment. The study interviews students from both sites using semi-structured interviews. Taiwanese and Macao students will discuss programme issues, cooperation, and results in focus groups. To supplement primary data, government policy documents, programme reports, academic literature on cross-strait cultural interaction and tourist policy, and media coverage will be analysed. Triangulation, comparison, and theme analysis will ensure study validity and reliability. In Figure 2, a complete report with case studies, quotes, qualitative data, graphs, and charts will summarise the findings. Research ethics and validity depend on participant consent, confidentiality, and ethics.

### **3.2 Define and research terms cultural interchange elements across borders**

The cross-strait cultural exchange study will assess Tour Programme comprehension and grading criteria to determine how travel, immersion, and workshops improve Macao-Taiwan cultural understanding. To assess how the Study Tour Programme influenced participants' identities, experiences, attitudes, and cultural awareness, many criteria will be used. Duration, participant demographics, pre- and post-program cultural comprehension, self-perceptions of appreciation, empathy, and respect, Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien comfort, personal development, cultural exploration, career development, networking, prior cultural exposure, and cross-cultural receptivity are considered.

#### 4 Research analysis and findings

This study adopted Allport's intergroup contact theory. This theory points out that positive contact effects require the following elements: collaboration between groups, common goals, equality of status between groups, and support from authority. Several themes in this section are examples of this theory.

For example, in the topic of promoting cross-cultural cooperation in the theme analysis, the summer camp completed the paper report through teamwork. Participants from different regions worked together and lived in harmony, which enhanced cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, which fully demonstrated inter-group cooperation and shared goals. In terms of overall comparative analysis, the study tour program conforms to Allport's contact effect theory, promotes the improvement of cross-strait relations, and enhances understanding and respect among participants. This shows that the study tour program satisfies intergroup contact to a certain extent and ideal conditions.

In addition, at the level of identity and belonging, study tour projects promote the connection and sense of belonging among participants from different backgrounds, and enhance the “Chinese” identity. From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, this is through cross-cultural Communication and interaction promote the recognition and integration between groups.

This study reflects that when the Macau government develops the cultural industry, it can use study tour programs to allow participants to appreciate the cultural customs and history of different regions. This will enable Macao to play its unique role in cross-strait cultural exchanges. As an important participant and powerful promoter of study tour activities, Macao can rely on its unique cultural resources and superior geographical location to provide rich and diverse cultural experiences for young people on both sides of the cross-strait, and promote the improvement of cultural awareness and diversification of cultural appreciation.

Respondent demographics are displayed in Table 1. Region, age, gender, occupation, degree of education, and language are all included in the table's content. Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China comprised the respondents. The ages of the respondents varied from 22 to 41. They have earned degrees ranging from a bachelor's to a doctorate. Fourteen subjects in all were questioned. Seven mainland university students, three university students from Hong Kong (one of whom are new immigrants to Hong Kong, the other two are from the mainland), three university students from Taiwan Region, and one university student from Macau are among the students. Proficiency in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Taiwanese Hokkien is also displayed in

the table. Their communication and linguistic abilities range from basic to fluent. This study also conducted expert interviews with 14 experts from government, culture, education, tourism and other fields.

**Table 1:** Summary of demographics

#	Region	Age	Gender	Educational Background	Mandarin Proficiency	Cantonese	Taiwanese Hokkien Proficiency
A1	Chinese mainland	26	Female	Master	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A2	Chinese mainland	26	Female	Master	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A3	Chinese mainland	26	Male	Master	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A4	Chinese mainland	25	Female	Master	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A5	Chinese mainland	30	Female	Ph.D	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A6	Chinese mainland	31	Female	Ph.D	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A7	Chinese mainland	25	Female	Ph.D	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	0 (None)
A8	Hong Kong	25	Female	Ph.D	5 (Fluent)	5 (Fluent)	5 (Fluent)
A9	Hong Kong	23	Female	Bachelor	5 (Fluent)	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)
A10	Hong Kong	28	Female	Master	5 (Fluent)	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)
A11	Macao	30	Male	Ph.D	<sup>4</sup> (Advanced)	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)
A12	Taiwan Region	23	Male	Bachelor	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	5 (Fluent)
A13	Taiwan Region	22	Male	Bachelor	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	5 (Fluent)
A14	Taiwan Region	41	Female	Ph.D	5 (Fluent)	0 (None)	5 (Fluent)

**Table 2:** Summary of expert interviews

#	Region	Gender	Profession
A1	Chinese mainland	Female	Associate Professor
A2	Chinese mainland	Female	Associate Professor
A3	Chinese mainland	Female	Associate Professor
A4	Chinese mainland	Male	Associate Professor
A5	Chinese mainland	Female	Associate Professor
A6	Macao	Female	CEO
A7	Macao	Female	Director
A8	Macao	Female	Director
A9	Macao	Female	Vice President

#	Region	Gender	Profession
A10	Macao	Female	Director
A11	Macao	Male	Associate Professor
A12	Macao	Male	Associate Professor
A13	Macao	Male	Government officials
A14	Macao	Male	Government officials

## 4.1 Thematic analysis

### 4.1.1 Themes and supporting arguments for analyzing the study tour program

#### Theme 1. Cultural awareness and appreciation

Within the framework of intergroup contact theory, cultural awareness and appreciation are closely related and present in many aspects. This theory emphasizes the interaction of different groups, such as during study tours, which provides opportunities for people to understand each other's cultures, enhances their awareness and understanding of different cultures, and helps break down cultural barriers. It believes that positive contact can change stereotypes and allow people to view other groups from a more objective and comprehensive perspective. Cultural awareness and appreciation also promote cultural integration and innovation. The theory provides support for practice, clarifies the conditions for promoting cultural exchanges, provides a basis for event organization, and guides curriculum design in the field of education. From a social perspective, it helps to build a harmonious and diverse society, reduce conflicts, enhance cohesion, and promote social development and cultural diversity.

#### Theme 2. Personal growth and identity changes

Intergroup contact theory is closely linked to personal growth and identity change. When individuals participate in contact between different groups, as explained in intergroup contact theory, new horizons and experiences will be opened. When interacting with other groups, individuals have the opportunity to be exposed to a diversity of values, ways of thinking, and patterns of behavior. This rich communication environment prompts individuals to reflect on themselves, thereby promoting the deepening of self-understanding, which is an important aspect of personal growth. Thus, through contact with different groups, individuals may integrate new elements into their own identities, making their identities more diversified and enriched, realizing dynamic changes and development of identities, which is consistent with the view in intergroup contact theory that group interaction promotes individual transformation. The study tour encouraged introspection and cross-cultural learning. Many program participants reported that their cultures and identities had transformed. Those who took the study tour felt more connected to their roots and proud of their heritage. People in Hong Kong and Macau took pride in their dual identities and felt a sense of belonging to both

cultures. Following cross-cultural immersion, respondents' cross-strait identities shifted. Taiwanese students have the opportunity to experience the institutional benefits of Hong Kong and Macao during study tours. Reduce intergroup anxiety by strengthening mutual identification through the intergroup empathy mechanism.

### Theme 3. Promoting intercultural cooperation

Intergroup contact theory is closely related to promoting intercultural cooperation. This theory emphasizes contact and interaction between different groups and provides a basis for cross-cultural cooperation. When different groups meet in an equal and friendly situation according to the theory, such as in international cooperation projects or multicultural exchange activities, mutual understanding and trust can be enhanced. Through contact, all parties can realize each other's strengths and differences, and then better divide work and collaborate. This kind of interaction can also break the misunderstandings and prejudices caused by cultural barriers, create an atmosphere conducive to cooperation, promote resource sharing and complementation of advantages, promote the smooth development of cross-cultural cooperation, and is in line with the concept of intergroup contact theory to promote the positive development of group relations. The summer camp consists of eight groups in total. Every group has to work together to finish a thesis report. The proposal report and the defence make up the two sections of the thesis report. It was noted that meaningful exchanges with peers from the host culture may be had despite language obstacles. The four groups—Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan Region, and the Chinese mainland—share one objective. They coexist peacefully, collaborate fairly, and work as a team. Through in-depth cross-cultural encounters, both parties can develop empathy, ease fear, and improve understanding.

### Theme 4. Dispel prejudices

Intergroup contact theory is closely related to the elimination of prejudice. This theory believes that contact between different groups is an important way to reduce prejudice. When individuals have the opportunity to have real and in-depth contact with other groups, such as in study tours, they can personally understand each other's behaviors, concepts, and lifestyles, thereby breaking the barriers based on stereotypes and lack of understanding. This kind of contact encourages people to view other groups from a more objective and comprehensive perspective, recognize the diversity and individual differences of the group, thereby reducing one-sided evaluation and prejudice against the entire group, and promoting understanding and harmonious coexistence between groups. Study tours give youth groups in mainland China, Macau SAR, Hong Kong SAR, and Taiwan Region a better platform for indirect intergroup contact, making up for the drawbacks of direct contact conditions (geographical distance). It is crucial in forming their national identity and popular worldview. Everyone questioned their own opinions and listened to others during group conversations. Everyone at the



camp not only took part in the camp's activities but also spent the evenings touring Beijing's beautiful neighborhoods and historical places. Everyone has gained a deeper awareness of one another's cultural practices as a result of this procedure. Get rid of outdated ideas.

#### Theme 5. Emotional change management

Intergroup contact theory is relevant to the management of emotional change. In contact with different groups, individuals may face various emotional changes, such as anxiety, excitement, etc. This theory can help understand the causes of these emotions, and by guiding positive contact, encourage individuals to adjust their emotions, better adapt to group interactions, and achieve benign management of emotions. The program's emphasis on practice led to a range of reactions from respondents. The study tour was exciting, exciting in terms of culture, shocking, and uncomfortable. As their feelings confronted their prejudices and presumptions, respondents thought about and developed. Peer support and emotional processing were secure within the program. These emotional journeys demonstrated the transformational impact of cross-cultural immersion by assisting responders in becoming more resilient and self-aware.

#### Theme 6. Improved cross-strait relations

Intergroup contact theory is closely related to improving cross-strait relations. By promoting contact and exchanges between different groups on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, such as interactions in the fields of culture, education and other fields, we can enhance mutual understanding and trust, reduce misunderstandings and prejudices, and thus provide a positive impetus for improving cross-strait relations. This is in line with the theory's concept of promoting the development of group relations. The program's emphasis on common aging technologies and culture led to a more positive perception of cross-strait ties among respondents. In Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China, aging technologies are explored through facilitated conversations and hands-on learning. To promote cross-strait ties, increased cooperation, understanding, and cultural exchange were proposed. The program gave participants a sense of common identity and purpose, which increased their optimism toward relations between Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China.

#### Theme 7. Collaboration

Intergroup contact theory is relevant to collaboration. When different groups come into contact, they can communicate and learn from each other, give full play to their respective strengths, promote collaboration, and improve collaboration effects. It was agreed upon by all students to strengthen their contacts across the cross-strait. Based on their own experiences, respondents offered recommendations for how technology for aging may be promoted through dialogue. Everyone's awareness of the aging condition and local elder care

practices has improved as a result of these talks. Let everyone attempt, from a global standpoint, to investigate workable ideas that both address the aging of the population and align with the ancient Chinese concept of valuing the old. The respondents felt equipped to advance constructive change and understanding between the cross-strait. The enthusiasm and inventiveness of the respondents encouraged cooperation, creativity, and respect. Additionally, the respondents opine that the facilitation of integrated cultural and tourism industry development will serve to enhance cross-strait youth exchanges.

#### Theme 8. Research evaluation/design

Intergroup contact theory is closely related to research evaluation/design. In terms of research evaluation, it can be used as a theoretical basis to measure the various effects produced after contact between different groups. For example, by observing and analyzing the changes in attitudes, behavioral patterns, and cooperation results before and after the contact, the impact of intergroup contact on social harmony, cultural exchange, etc. can be evaluated. In terms of research design, intergroup contact theory can provide researchers with ideas and frameworks. Researchers can design experiments or surveys based on this theory, and reasonably arrange the contact scenes, conditions, and methods of different groups to explore how to better promote positive intergroup interactions, reduce conflicts and misunderstandings, thereby achieving the goals of the research and providing guidance for practical applications. Assessment of the research design, activities, and goals is necessary for success. The research's activities, content, and organization were all well reviewed by respondents, who also pointed out its advantages and disadvantages. Respondents assessed the learning aims and outcomes of the research and made suggestions for improvements with the assistance of structured evaluations and reflective discussions. In order to satisfy the evolving requirements and goals of participants, the program fosters innovation and constant improvement, guaranteeing its applicability and influence in fostering cooperation and understanding across cross-strait.

#### Theme 9. Personal motivations

Intergroup contact theory is related to individual motivation. This theory affects the motivation of individuals to participate in contact with different groups, such as the pursuit of cultural exploration and knowledge expansion. At the same time, during the intergroup contact process, individual motivation may also change due to the contact experience, prompting individuals to further adjust their behavior and goals. Research findings, learning, and engagement were impacted by respondent motivations. Analysis revealed reasons for networking, job advancement, cultural curiosity, and personal growth. Respondents' participation and choice of activities were influenced by these motives, highlighting the necessity of tailoring programs to goals and learning styles. Encouraging participants to participate and contemplate influenced their research encounters

and results. The program recognizes and responds to the varied needs and motivations of respondents, which enhances the inclusiveness and enrichment of learning.

#### Theme 10. Unexpected results and lessons

Intergroup contact theory is associated with unexpected results and lessons. Practices based on this theory may lead to unexpected situations, such as unexpected conflicts or integration between different groups. This allows us to reflect on the application of the theory, summarize the lessons, and provide experience for better application of the theory to promote positive intergroup relations. Unexpected program possibilities and difficulties led to respondent growth. Respondents learned resilience and adaptation from challenges. Unexpected happenings improved program connections. Respondents' understanding of cross-cultural interactions was aided by their acceptance of ambiguity and the unexpected. Through introspection and discussion, respondents discovered things about the world and themselves, illustrating how cross-cultural interchange alters things.

## 4.2 Moderator: Language proficiency

In intergroup contact theory, language is an important factor. The government's consideration of the impact of language on the growth of the cultural industry is relevant. When different groups come into contact, language affects cultural communication and exchange, which in turn affects the cultural industry. Multilingual use can promote positive intergroup contact and promote the development of the cultural industry.

#### Theme 1. Impact on communication and engagement

Mandarin is a highly fluent language spoken by students from Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China. Proficiency in language is very beneficial for communication, research, and classroom engagement. Mandarin facilitates cross-cultural interactions more easily.

#### Theme 2. Language as a cultural bridge

More than words, language reflects the conventions, subtleties, and standards of a society. Respondents navigate cultural language use to recognize linguistic diversity. To comprehend cultural variations across many locales, one must grasp linguistic and cultural disparities. Respondents stressed cultural sensitivity and nuanced interpretation in cross-cultural communication, despite the fact that everyone spoke Mandarin with a different accent. They also valued language as a vehicle for cultural communication.

### Theme 3. Language growth

Research is greatly aided by both immersion learning and formal education. Studies are aided by communication and cultural awareness. Proper language comprehension and cross-cultural communication facilitate the proper conduct of research. Gaining an understanding of one another's accents and linguistic variances can promote self-awareness and cultural awareness.

### Theme 4. Language, identity

An additional consideration of identity is the connection between language and identity. The same language context can foster friendships and intergroup empathy.

### Theme 5. Language and technology

Summer camps can now be held both offline and online thanks to technology. It was agreed upon by the respondents that technology removes the obstacle of physical distance. Technology can improve communication between different cultures.

## **4.3 Moderator: Motivations for participation**

### Theme 1. Program goal alignment

Engagement and satisfaction are increased when personal incentives align with program objectives. The curriculum promotes professional aspirations, cultural immersion, and personal development. Immersion programs often produce surprising outcomes that cause participants to reevaluate their objectives. Respondents may become more resilient and content during a study tour if they are presented with fresh difficulties and possibilities during cross-cultural exchange.

### Theme 2. Motivation and learning methods

Participation and learning are contingent upon the respondent's motivation. Respondents are motivated by networking, career success, and cultural immersion. To account for a range of incentives, programs need to adjust to respondent engagement and learning preferences. Activities with goals improve learning and program engagement.

### Theme 3. Personal change

Respondents broaden their horizons and gain knowledge of a new culture. New viewpoints and cultures bring with them personal and cultural obstacles. Personal breakthroughs and self-awareness are the results of deep introspection and self-reflection. People gain empathy and understanding through cultural immersion.

#### Theme 4. Career development and networking

The program aids participants in networking and job placement in host cultures. Through networking and joint initiatives, one can meet peers and professionals in the sector, which increases one's visibility and career opportunities. Cross-cultural competency and cultural competency are essential in today's globalized workforce. Immersion in different cultures aids programs. The observable advantages help respondents progress in their careers.

#### Theme 5. Cross-strait contribution

The cross-strait connections are improved by respondents with a variety of motivations. Mutual respect between Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China is defined by future cooperation, community ties, and cultural understanding. Respondents gain identity and purpose through cross-cultural communication and cooperation. Cross-strait cooperation is made possible by more amicable and inclusive relations between Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China.

### 4.4 Moderator: Prior cultural exposure

The government should be concerned about young people's attitudes toward other cultures because they will have an impact on how the cultural industry develops.

#### Theme 1. Openness and adaptability

Exposure to different cultures influences responders' flexibility and openness. Individuals with different viewpoints and customs could feel more at ease in unfamiliar societies. Respondents who lack cultural experience could find it difficult. They flourish and adjust to new cultures with the support and empathy of others. To adapt, make the most of significant cross-cultural interactions, curiosity, and cultural immersion. With the right assistance and attitude, even those with minimal experience can excel in the program. With exposure, openness and adaptability grow.

#### Theme 2. Using prior knowledge

Program learning is improved by cultural knowledge. New information is incorporated into their frameworks to comprehend both civilizations. Respondents comprehend variety better when they make cultural comparisons and draw on existing knowledge. Over the course of the program, prior cultural knowledge is built upon to achieve cultural fluency and cross-cultural understanding.

#### Theme 3. Confront stereotypes

Respondents are able to confront their prejudices and preconceptions with the aid of varied viewpoints and critical evaluation. Exposure to different cultures heightens awareness of preconceptions and bias analysis. Respondents must get

over preconceptions and recognize the rich cultural diversity of Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Mainland China. Interaction and discourse impart cultural dynamics, empathy, and respect.

#### Theme 4. Cultural membership and identity

Respondents' sense of cultural identification and belonging is aided by prior exposure to other cultures. In order to manage their identity in a new culture, respondents draw connections to both cultures through their shared cultural history and personal experiences. Experienced responders can investigate their cultural heritage and numerous identities with the program's assistance. Learning about a new culture can give newcomers a sense of discovery and belonging. Prior exposure aids in the respondents' comprehension of cultural identity.

#### Theme 5. Future engagement, advocacy

Study tours might raise one's awareness of other cultures. It encourages collaboration and understanding between students from Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and the Chinese mainland. Meaningful cross-cultural communication and diversity are fostered through exchanging insights and advancing cultural awareness. Students from Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and mainland China were encouraged to respect and work together on the study tour, which laid the groundwork for future collaboration.

### 4.5 Overall comparative analysis

The effectiveness and depth of cultural immersion (Theme 1) and attitudes toward cross-strait connections (Theme 2) serve as indicators of the study tour program's effects.

#### Theme 1. Cultural immersion depth and effectiveness

Program length steadily raised learning difficulty and cultural engagement. Spending more time in cultural activities helped the respondents understand more about the host culture. Effectively crafted exercises that promoted introspection and communication improved cultural education. Conversation, practical exercises, and introspection aided in the respondents' understanding of culture. Complete program immersion necessitated involvement and engagement on your part. Attending cultural activities, interacting with locals, and interviewing them all improved the study tour. Respondents developed an appreciation and comprehension of the host culture. The depth and effectiveness of cultural immersion were assessed by program duration, activity design, and respondent involvement. The majority of occurrences and locations are displayed in Figure 3.

**Figure 3:** Photos taken during study tour activities Theme 2. Views on cross-strait relations



According to Allport (1954), positive contact effects require the following four factors: intergroup collaboration, common goals, equality of status between groups, and authority support. This study tour satisfied Allport's theory of the contact effect. Participants' views of the other culture changed significantly between pre- and post-program surveys. Personal interactions across cultures fostered empathy and understanding, challenging stereotypes and biases. Participants said meeting other cultures humanized them, dispelled prejudices, and built respect. Shared history and culture workshops improved cross-strait relations. Taiwan and Macao's shared culture and heritage made participants value cross-strait cooperation. Participants' quotes and reflections showed how personal interactions affect cross-strait relations. Participants described their interactions with people from other cultures, emphasizing the transformative power of human connection to promote understanding and reconciliation. Study Tour Program

promoted dialogue, cross-strait relations, and community unity. Individual Study Tour Program experiences improved language proficiency and intercultural communication (Theme 1), motivation and engagement (Theme 2), and prior exposure and openness to new experiences (Theme 3).

#### Theme 1: Language and intercultural communication

Language proficiency correlated with communication comfort. Fluent local language speakers felt more comfortable interacting with locals, enriching their cultural experiences. Participants showed perseverance and creativity in intercultural communication to overcome language barriers. Cultural sensitivity and nonverbal communication were stressed in cross-cultural communication.

#### Theme 2. Motivation and engagement

Motivations that matched program goals determined participant satisfaction and engagement. Personal growth drove programme participation. Participants often discovered new interests and learned from unexpected program events. Understanding diverse motivations and adapting to changing needs increased participant satisfaction and engagement.

#### Theme 3. Past Experience and openness

Participants understood the program better due to diverse cultural exposure. The program helped beginners with facilitators and peers. The program challenged stereotypes and encouraged innovation to promote diversity. These themes showed how individual experiences shape Study Tour Program participants' perceptions and outcomes, demonstrating the program's role in promoting intercultural understanding, personal growth, and cross-cultural engagement. The Study Tour Program explored identity and belonging through two themes: participants' changing cultural identity and self-perception (Theme 1) and the program's shared identity and belonging (Theme 2).

#### Theme 1. Cultural identity and self-perception change

The program changed participants' cultural identity and self-perception, according to interviews and reflective essays. People rethought themselves and their culture through intercultural interactions. The program questioned identity and enriched culture. Intercultural diversity may have altered identities and increased cultural appreciation. The program embraced diversity and made culture more inclusive.

#### Theme 2. Unity and identity

Program participants from diverse backgrounds connected and shared experiences, creating a sense of belonging. Group activities, workshops, and socializing helped participants bond over shared experiences. Macao and Taiwan's shared culture and heritage boosted "Chinese" identity. Embracing cultural differences strengthened participants' identities. The program built an international community by



celebrating cultural differences and highlighting shared values and experiences. These themes showed how the Study Tour Program shaped participants' identities and promoted global citizenship. Introspection, exploration, and shared experiences helped participants understand themselves and their culture, deepening their identity and belonging.

Our structured coding process with NVivo and manual methods identified themes. We found patterns in interviews, focus groups, and document analysis with this software. Cultural awareness and personal growth were common themes across data collection points, showing how the program affected participants. Our themes were triangulated with secondary data from government policy documents and academic literature for consistency and reliability. A small sample size may limit generalisation, but this approach strengthened our results. However, triangulation ensured data was supported by multiple sources and perspectives, reducing these limitations.

We explicitly used Allport's intergroup contact theory to explain how the program's cross-strait interactions promoted empathy, reduced intergroup anxiety, and challenged stereotypes. Participant interactions met positive intergroup contact criteria like collaboration and shared goals. Our critical evaluation of the program's results revealed its strengths and weaknesses. Despite language barriers and the need for longer programs, the program promoted cooperation and shared identity. Additionally, the program's impact on participants' cultural identity and regional relations was considered. These preliminary results are promising, but more research is needed to determine if these changes last. This comprehensive analysis combines theory and practice to understand program effects.

#### **4.6 Outlook and teamwork**

##### **Theme 1. Collaboration inspiration and challenges**

In intergroup contact theory, mutual contact between different groups can bring inspiration for cooperation. For example, when people from different backgrounds, such as students from Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR, work together during study tours, their unique perspectives and thinking patterns will collide with each other, which is very likely to inspire innovative ideas and then give birth to new ones. However, challenges also exist objectively. Groups with different cultural backgrounds may have conflicts due to differences in values and work styles. For example, people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures may evaluate their contributions differently during teamwork.

Networking and relationship building encourage collaboration among study tour program participants. Participants valued cross-strait cooperation in arts, education, and other areas related to learning and growth. They welcomed the collaboration

but recognized some implementation challenges. Study tour requires creative coordination. Collaboration requires overcoming language and cultural barriers. Participants clearly recognized these obstacles and emphasized the need to overcome them in order to establish a meaningful cross-strait partnership, thereby demonstrating a pragmatic attitude towards cooperation.

#### Theme 2: Program impact and improvement

Participants actively suggested ways to improve planned activities and learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses. Study tour organizers use feedback to improve. Participants’ suggestions can promote cultural exchanges and strengthen ties between Macao SAR and Taiwan Region. They also explore the long-term impact of the program on their personal and professional lives, promoting collaboration and cross-cultural understanding. This program is related to the future of participants after the study tour and cross-strait relations. This is consistent with the concept of intergroup contact theory to promote intergroup interaction and understanding, and is conducive to improving project quality and promoting regional cooperation and exchanges.

#### 4.7 Comparative analysis: Variations in group program impact

In terms of intergroup contact theory, when different groups participate in study tours, the differences in their impacts can be analyzed and understood through this theory. For example, when groups from different regions and cultural backgrounds interact and collaborate on the same project, intergroup contact theory can explain the differences in communication methods and cooperation effects between them. Through comparative analysis of group program impact, we can further verify the intergroup contact theory’s views on how group differences affect cooperation outcomes, and also discover the advantages and problems of different groups in the contact process, providing a basis for optimizing inter-group relations.

For study tours, it is a typical group program in itself. It can be used to study the differences in the impact of different study travel projects on student groups. For example, study tours with different themes, locations, and organizational forms have different impacts on knowledge acquisition, ability development, and social relationships. Through this comparative analysis, study tour programs can be better designed and improved to make them more consistent with students’ needs and educational goals, just as group interactions are optimized based on intergroup contact theory to enhance the positive impact of study tours on student groups, reduce possible problems, such as conflicts between students or poor learning results.

The program affects Macao and Taiwanese students and professionals differently. Disparities arise from participant learning goals and outcomes. Study Tour Program goals are personal growth, cultural immersion, and perspective expansion.

For networking, career advancement, and field collaborations, professionals may attend. Motivations and expectations affect program perception and outcomes. Taiwanese and Macao participants' cultures and experiences affect program engagement and learning. Different cultures and life experiences shape intercultural interactions. Diverse participants create a dynamic learning environment where people learn from each other's perspectives and cultural nuances, deepening their understanding of cross-strait relations and cultural dynamics. Gender and occupation affect program experiences. Gender influences communication, group dynamics, and social interactions, shaping participants' experiences. Different professionals' goals and perspectives may affect their interactions and engagement in the program. Understanding these demographic differences helps program organizers tailor interventions and support mechanisms to participants' diverse needs and interests, maximizing the program's impact across all groups.

Cultural heritage and Chinese-Portuguese experiences shape Macaoans' views. Macau's culture is admired and cross-strait cooperation is sought. Many Macao participants praise the program's Taiwan-Macao culture. Participants from Taiwan want to strengthen Macao ties and value their culture. They promote cross-strait cooperation for cultural exchange, economic growth, and prosperity. Participants from Taiwan say the program challenged stereotypes and improved cross-strait understanding. The Study Tour Program can improve Taiwan-Macao relations, say student and professional groups. Different perspectives show how the program promotes Macao-Taiwan cultural exchange and collaboration to improve cross-strait relations and regional prosperity. Figure 4 explains the repeated words in themes.



exploration, and shared experiences deepened participants' identity and belonging by understanding themselves and their culture.

## 5 Discussion and findings

This method was effective for studying the Study Tour Program's impact on Macao-Taiwan cultural exchange. The study collected diverse participant and stakeholder perspectives using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Individual perspectives from in-depth semi-structured interviews enriched program impact analysis. Focus groups allowed participants to freely discuss and collaborate, enriching shared experiences and challenges. Official reports, policy documents, and media coverage illuminated cross-strait cultural exchange's socio-political landscape. The study's findings were more credible and valid because the research methodology triangulated data from multiple sources to ensure data interpretation and analysis rigor and reliability.

To ensure a complete study, maximize sample size across data collection methods to capture diverse perspectives and strengthen findings. Given practical constraints, we recommend the largest sample size. Greater data depth and richness enable theme identification and key insight saturation with larger samples. For diverse perspectives and dynamic interactions, 8 10-person focus groups work best. We can examine shared experiences, group dynamics, and consensus on key cross-strait cultural exchange issues because our sample size adequately represents participant subgroups. These conversations reveal the program's subtle impact that interviews may miss. These documents supplement primary data collection by reviewing official reports, policy documents, media coverage, and academic literature. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis can capture the complexities of cross-strait cultural exchange in the Study Tour Program with larger sample sizes. Examining individual experiences, group dynamics, and contextual factors improves study rigor and validity.

Based on the participants' experiences and perceptions, the study tour provides a unique perspective on cross-strait cultural exchanges and cooperation. This is related to the intergroup contact theory. Through study tours, residents of Macao SAR and Taiwan Region have the opportunity to come into contact. Just as the group interaction emphasized in the intergroup contact theory promotes communication among people in different regions. Participants emphasized the importance of the project in connecting residents of the two places and exploring inspirations and challenges for collaboration to envision joint projects, embodying the idea of promoting cooperation through communication in intergroup contact. They recognized communication barriers and cultural differences, which is also in line with the intergroup contact theory's explanation of the problems that different groups may face in contact, and also indicated the need to take active measures to

improve cooperation, and the participants' feedback demonstrated the project's impact on cultural exchanges, cross-strait. The long-term impact of understanding and cooperation, as well as the role in personal and professional life, reflect the value of intergroup contact for relationship building and cultural understanding. Project organizers can adapt to changing needs based on participant feedback and combine intergroup contact theory to maximize the long-term impact and effectiveness of cultural projects.

From the perspective of intergroup contact theory, the impact of learning goals, culture, and previous experiences on study tour projects is crucial. Different perspectives and diversity of goals, like the diverse character of groups in intergroup contact, influence how students and professionals engage in projects, their interactions, and their final outcomes. Due to their unique cultural heritage and regional background, Macao SAR and Taiwan region participants have unique perspectives to enrich cross-strait exchanges and enhance cultural understanding, which reflects the differences and values brought by different group backgrounds in intergroup contact. Taking into account the impact of factors such as gender and occupation on individual experiences, we need customized approaches to meet the needs of different participants to maximize the impact of projects across all groups, which is consistent with the focus on individual differences in intergroup contact theory to promote positive interaction. In line with the concept of positive interaction, participants emphasize that actively overcoming cultural and communication barriers is the key to achieving good interaction during intergroup contact. The efforts made reflect the application and embodiment of intergroup contact theory in practice.

Research shows that study tour program participants have different views on cross-strait cultural exchanges and cooperation. The project's ability to connect Macao SAR and Taiwan Region is in line with the concept of promoting connections between different groups in intergroup contact, creating conditions for possible joint projects in the future. Participants' reflections illustrate the project's role in promoting meaningful and lasting cross-cultural collaboration, meeting the requirement to highlight both immediate and long-term impact. Despite the communication and cultural barriers, participants recognized the challenges of cross-strait cooperation and understood the need to actively address them, which is consistent with the view in intergroup contact theory that group differences and difficulties need to be actively addressed. Participants' feedback on the long-term impact of the program in their personal and professional lives demonstrates its value in relationship building and cultural understanding, a reflection of how intergroup contact promotes mutual understanding and integration between groups. Participant feedback helps the program adapt to changing needs and expectations, just as in intergroup contact the interaction method is constantly adjusted according to the actual situation to ensure effectiveness. The impact of learning goals, cultural background, and prior experience on program participation, as well

as the improvement of cross-strait exchanges through perspective-goal dynamics, all point to the need for specific approaches to the specific circumstances of participants, which is consistent with the focus on individuals and groups in intergroup contact theory. The idea of characteristics to optimize interaction effects was also examined, and the impact of background, motivation, and demographic factors such as gender and occupation on the results was also examined, further illustrating the application of intergroup contact theory in analyzing such phenomena.

The “Language Proficiency and Intercultural Communication” section emphasizes the important role of language in study tour projects. Language affects participants' participation and communication in the project, just like the key position of communication tools in intergroup contact. Mandarin help participants understand local culture, reflecting the role of language in promoting cultural understanding between groups, while language barriers prompt participants to think creatively, reflecting how they cope with difficulties in intergroup contact, highlighting The complexity of cross-cultural communication. The personal and professional goals of participants participating in the project demonstrate the impact of different motivations on participation in intergroup contact, with both external career development factors and internal desires for personal growth and cultural exploration at play. The influence of culture on participants' openness to new experiences is also consistent with the shaping of individual attitudes and behaviors by a cultural background in intergroup contact.

The study found that the impact of program length on cultural immersion and effectiveness echoes the association of contact time and depth on group interaction outcomes in intergroup contact theory. Longer projects provide participants with a deeper understanding of local culture and history, supporting discussions of the relationship between duration and learning outcomes. Factors such as region, age, education, and language shape different perspectives and participation, reflecting the impact of various factors in intergroup contact on different groups, and supporting the need to study the experiences of different subgroups of participants. The use of technology for cross-cultural communication, such as translation applications, helps overcome language barriers, but at the same time requires cultural sensitivity and awareness of its limitations, which reflects the importance of technology as an auxiliary means combined with cultural understanding in intergroup contact, Meet the requirements of cross-cultural communication. The unexpected results and lessons learned from the project show that it can help people overcome obstacles. Participants develop critical thinking skills by responding to unexpected events, which reflects the growth of individuals in different situations during intergroup contact and promotes personal development. Regarding the research question, study tours increase cultural awareness and empathy by immersing participants in different customs, traditions, and

perspectives, consistent with the idea that intergroup contact promotes cultural understanding and emotional resonance. Longer immersion programs better facilitated cultural learning, while the limitations of shorter programs on cultural exploration and understanding were reflected back on. The study tour changed the cultural and personal identities of the participants. Through reflection and interaction, they better understood and connected their own cultures, gained a more detailed and positive view of cross-strait relations, promoted regional cooperation and project planning, and reflected on the impact of intergroup contact on groups. Participants with different motivations and goals enriched the project. Accidental factors, cultural differences, language barriers, etc. in the study tour all became opportunities for personal growth. Self-discovery and learning from these experiences cultivated the ability to adapt in uncertain times. Participants felt that the study tour had changed their lives and careers. Cultural exchange, self-discovery and meaningful connections became important learning and reflection contents, which are consistent with the multi-faceted impact of group interaction in intergroup contact theory.

## 6 Conclusion

The development of Macau's study tour policy is closely linked to the cultural industry. Its evolution enriches cultural experience and promotes exchanges, and from “national education” to “national education + tourism” it drives the coordinated development of the cultural tourism industry. Study tours and other cultural exchange programs have grown in importance as tools for the government to support intercultural communication and the growth of the cultural industries. The building of cross-strait study tour cultural circles can be facilitated by the cultural industry. In order to support the cultural industry, the government can use the sixth “Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan” population aging project summer camp study tour plan as a model, according to the study's final analysis. The study result demonstrates how young people's interactions in mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan Region can satisfy Allport, G. W.'s ideal conditions for direct intergroup contact within the institutional framework of “one country, two systems”. Young people originating from mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan Region are susceptible to cultural differences during the contact process because of variations in economic development, systems, ideologies, etc. They had a place to build friendships, a chance to connect with one another, and a chance to learn about the differences between mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Region at the 6th “Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan” Population Aging Special Summer Camp. These results imply that the program fosters cross-strait relations and cultural understanding. Taiwan Region, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and mainland China's cultural cooperation is influenced by personal, linguistic, and cultural factors. In spite of communication barriers and cultural disparities,



participants recognized the program's capacity to promote cooperation and education via networking and common experiences. This study reflects that when the Macau government develops the cultural industry, it can use study tour programs to allow participants to appreciate the cultural customs and history of different regions. This will enable Macao to play its unique role in cross-strait cultural exchanges. As an important participant and powerful promoter of study tour activities, Macao can rely on its unique cultural resources and superior geographical location to provide rich and diverse cultural experiences for young people on both sides of the cross-strait, and promote the improvement of cultural awareness and diversification of cultural appreciation. This study fills the gap in the literature on long-term cultural integration, identity construction and cultural policy implications to better understand the cultural relations between Macau SAR, Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan and Mainland China, where intergroup contact theory is an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon that provides strong theoretical support.

According to intergroup contact theory, positive contact effects require collaboration between groups, common goals, equality of status between groups, and support from authority. In the situation, we can clearly see that youth groups in Taiwan Region, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macao Special Administrative Region, and mainland China have shown a positive contact mentality and have a positive impact on national identity and mainstream ideology. The government's construction of a cross-strait study tour cultural circle is in line with the concept of providing contact opportunities for different regions in the intergroup contact theory. Although there is a certain geographical distance between various places, summer camps and study tour programs make up for the lack of direct contact and create conditions for indirect contact between multiple groups.

In the process of building a cultural circle, language exchange is of crucial importance. Regarding language communication, although young people in the Taiwan Region, the Hong Kong SAR, the Macao SAR and the mainland of China all use Mandarin as the communication language, which eliminates language barriers to a certain extent and provides a foundation for communication among them in theory. As mentioned in the role of the communication bridge, however, we still need to pay attention to the depth and effect of communication to better achieve the spread and understanding of culture, which is in line with the concept of promoting mutual understanding through effective communication in intergroup contact theory. Equal treatment is one of the important contents of intergroup contact theory. In activities such as study tours, young people in these regions are treated equally. They must abide by local common laws and regulations and bear corresponding responsibilities. This equal environment lays a fair foundation for the interaction between young people from different regions, allowing them to communicate and cooperate on an equal footing, which meets

the requirement of equal status between groups in intergroup contact theory. The cultivation of a cooperative spirit is crucial to interaction between groups. During the study tour, young people from different regions interacted in a cooperative rather than competitive manner. For example, throughout the study tour, groups from four regions worked together, shared resources, and coexisted peacefully to achieve a common goal. Through in-depth dialogue, they promoted mutual empathy, reduced anxiety, and enhanced mutual understanding. This process is a vivid practice of intergroup collaboration in intergroup contact theory, which promotes the integration and establishment of positive relationships between different groups through common activities and goals.

Interviewees agreed that youth integration is related to government support for cultural industries, such as the establishment of study tour cultural circles. The high evaluation of the study tour program by program organizers and others reflects their understanding of the importance of cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation programs. The study recommends that policymakers fund intercultural exchanges, attract diverse participants, and foster linguistic and cultural sensitivity to realize the positive effects of intergroup contact theory. Legal and regulatory changes are also important to maintain cultural exchange plans. Macau can combine its own advantages to lead cross-strait cultural exchanges, which require institutional support and flexible legal protection.

In short, the study advocates cultural understanding, empathy and long-term study tour cooperation plans, and promotes cultural exchange and integration among the three places. It is not only in line with the theory of intergroup contact, but also provides useful reference for related research and practice.

## **7 Implications**

The study was successful, but its small sample size and short program duration may limit generalisability. The study recommends larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal participant monitoring to assess the program's long-term effects. Continuous feedback and a more diverse participant pool will improve Macao-Taiwan program inclusivity and cultural understanding. These changes will help future program iterations serve more participants, according to the recommendations. Study affects cross-strait cultural exchange policy and practice. The study shows how cultural exchange programs like the Study Tour Program can improve social cohesion, shared cultural identities, and community engagement, helping policymakers, cultural organisations, and educators promote international diplomacy through culture. These efforts may inspire other regions to improve cross-cultural cooperation. Finally, the Study Tour Program improved Macao-Taiwan cultural exchange, collaboration, and respect.

The study's main theoretical contribution is applying Allport's intergroup contact theory to Macao-Taiwan cultural exchanges. Allport's theory states that intergroup contact reduces prejudice and fosters empathy. The study applies this framework to the "Ten Thousand Persons Plan," showing how structured cultural immersion and collaborative activities can reduce stereotypes and deepen cultural understanding. The Study Tour Program encourages diverse participants to work towards shared goals, which increases empathy and understanding. This supports Allport's intergroup contact conditions and shows how it can change participants' cultural identity and cross-cultural awareness. This study shows that cross-cultural exchange programs can change self-perception and intercultural empathy, adding to cultural identity theory. Participant views of their own and others' cultures change through collaborative and reflective activities. This suggests that cultural identity is more fluid and that exposure to other cultures leads to personal growth and reevaluation of one's place in society. Structured, goal-oriented interactions help cultural identity fluidity, especially in globalised cultural exchange programmes, according to the study. This research enhances our understanding of cultural identity and emphasises the power of cultural exchange to foster cross-regional cooperation and empathy.

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