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The Power of Extended Contact: The Attitudes of National Quemoy University Students Towards China

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ABSTRACT

With the current tense cross-strait relations, Taiwanese people generally have a more negative perception of China, except in Kinmen. Interestingly, more than 90% of the students at National Quemoy University (NQU) are from Taiwan. After they spent a few years in Kinmen, their attitude towards China became similar to that of the locals. This paper explores the factors that influence the attitudes of NQU students towards China, with NQU students as the research object. The study finds that extended contact is the critical factor. In qualitative research, this paper also confirmed that extended contact influences the attitudes of NQU students toward China through three mechanisms: 'reducing negative impressions of China', 'increasing positive perceptions/reconstructing the imagination of China', and 'aspiring to establish cross-border friendships'.

KEYWORDS

Kinmen/Quemoy; extended contact; cross-strait relations; youth exchanges; China; Taiwan

Introduction

Changes in cross-strait relations often affect the attitudes of people on both sides of the Strait towards each other. Cross-strait relations have been in a stalemate for the last decade. Taiwan, under the rule of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government, does not recognize the '1992 Consensus', which has been tacitly recognized by the top echelons of the two sides of the Taiwan Straits, while China has been shrinking the space for Taiwan in the international arena, and has been conducting military exercises in the Taiwan Straits frequently. Under these circumstances, as many as 61% of Taiwanese people have a negative attitude towards China,[1] while more than half of the mainland Chinese people, 55%,[2] favor an armed unification of Taiwan, both showing the hostility and tension between the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The only special case is Kinmen. Kinmen is an island between China and Taiwan, which was once the frontline of the confrontation between China and Taiwan after 1949, as well as the Cold War. Between 1956 and 1992, the KMT regime implemented a 'military rule' in Kinmen, which built up the local people's identification with the Republic of China (ROC), and this set of ideology has become the basis for the people's support of cross-strait exchanges and their

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[1]'In Taiwan, Views of Mainland China Mostly Negative' (May 12, 2020), *Pew Research Center*, accessed: June 15, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/05/12/in-taiwan- views-of-mainland-china-mostly-negative/.

[2]Adam Y. Liu and Xiaojun Li, 'Assessing Public Support for (Non)Peaceful Unification with Taiwan: Evidence from a Nationwide Survey in China', [2024] 33(145) Journal of Contemporary China 1–13.

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opposition to Taiwan's independence.[3] To date, the proportion of Kinmen people supporting the KMT in all elections is still much higher than that of the DPP. In addition, the fact that the residents of Kinmen have a close kinship with Xiamen, Fujian province of China has also become an important factor in the Kinmen people's pro-China sentiment.[4]

The author teaches at National Quemoy University (NQU) and finds that students at NQU have a more positive attitude towards China than young people in Taiwan and are more willing to interact with the other side of the Strait. However, more than 90% of the students at NQU are from Taiwan.[5] They do not have the war experience like the locals did, and they have grown up with an education emphasizing Taiwan's subjectivity. This leads to the research question: since the students of NQU come from Taiwan, their attitudes towards China should be no different from those of young people in Taiwan, so why do their attitudes towards China change for the better than those of young people in Taiwan after arriving in Kinmen?

This study is based on a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with first- to fourth-year full-time students at NQU. The survey was conducted between 1st and 30 April 2025, which is the end of the academic year, when first-year students have already spent one year in Kinmen, and fourth-year students are about to graduate. The study finds that compared to the people in Taiwan, the students at NQU had more opportunities for 'extended contact' with China, leading to changes in their attitudes towards China. In addition, through interviews, this paper also finds that in the current cross-strait reality, extended contact changes students' impressions of China through three mechanisms: reducing negative impressions of China, increasing positive perceptions/reconstructing the imagination of China, and transferring intimacy.

The second section of this paper begins with a review of the theories related to the attitudes towards the Chinese among Taiwanese people. The third section is the case study and the research methodology. Section 4 presents the quantitative findings and discussion. Section 5 uses the interview data to illustrate the effects of extended contact. Section 6 concludes the paper.

Taiwanese People's Attitudes Towards China

In discussing Taiwanese people's attitudes towards China, most of the prior literature has provided explanations from two perspectives: sense and rationality.[6] Sensualists believe that the basis of identification comes from the given structure, which includes the 'primordial theory' and the 'constructivist theory'.[7] For cross-strait study, provincial origin, identity, unification and independence, and political party identification all fall within the scope of Sensualist. Rationalists believe that rational people consciously pursue 'self-interest maximization', and therefore their identity will

[3]Michael Szonyi, translated by Huang Yuwen and Chen Xiangyang, *Qianxian daoyu: lengzhan xia de Jinmen* [Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line] (2011), 103–157; Po-Wei Jiang, *Lengzhan Jinmen: shijieshi yu diyushi de jiaozhi* [Cold War Kinmen: The Interweaving of World History and Regional History] (Kinmen: Kinmen National Park Administration, 2017), 73–188; Ho Hsin-chieh and Lee Yi-an, *Duanlie de hai: Jinmen mazu cong guogong qianxian dao Taiwan ouran de gongtongti* [The Broken Sea: Kinmen and Matsu, from the Communist Front Line to Taiwan's Accidental Commonwealth] (2022), 67–78.

[4]'The View from the Front Line between Taiwan and China' (April 5, 2023), *The Economist*, accessed 15 June, 2023, https://www.economist.com/asia/2023/04/05/the-view-from-the-front-line-between-taiwan-and-china.

[5]Academic Affairs Office, *NQU*, accessed: June 15, 2023, https://teach.nqu.edu.tw/p/412-1001-1025.php?Lang=zh-tw; 'Du jinmendaxue dou naxieren? Jinjiu zhugong xianfu buzhu baozeng guoli gaojiao meili' [Who are the students of NQU? Ginmen's Wine, 7000 County Grants Increase Charm of National Higher Education] (May 9, 2024), *Global Views*, accessed 15 June, 2023, https://city.gvm.com.tw/article/112360.

[6]Lin, Wu, and Charm, 'When Independence Meets Reality: Symbolic and Pragmatic Politics in Taiwan' (2023); Shu Keng et al., 'Sense, Sensitivity, and Sophistication in Shaping the Future of Cross-Strait Relations', [2006] *Issues and Studies*, 42(4) 23–66; Lu-Huei Chen et al., 'Interest-Driven or Identity-Based? An Analysis of Taiwanese People's Positions on Cross-Strait Economic Exchanges', [2009], 27(2) *Soochow Journal of Political Science* 87–125.

[7]For primordial theory, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*(New York: Basic Books, 2017); Clifford Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States, in Clifford Geertz(ed), *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York:Free Press,1963), pp.109–110; Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press,1998), p. 59. For constructivist theory, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso,1991), pp.199–206.

change according to the situation, depending on which strategy can deliver the most utility for the least cost.[8] The 'pro-independence Taiwanese businessmen' in China represent the rationalists who switch their identity between Taiwan and China to their advantage, e.g. claiming to be Chinese while in China and revealing their true identity only when they return to Taiwan. However, neither sense nor rationality can explain the changes in intergroup attitudes. Sense can only explain the attitude formation, while rationality only shows individual strategies, which can hardly reflect the real identity.

After the increase in cross-strait exchanges, academics have begun to explain the changes in intergroup attitudes from the perspective of contact. The mainstream argument is that direct contact is the only way to break intergroup prejudices, while the extended contact argument holds that it is not necessary for everyone to have contact with each other to break prejudices, as long as some of the people in the group have contact with the outgroups, the attitudes of the group towards the other group can be changed. More details are given below.

Direct Contact

In 1947, Williamson was the first to propose that 'positive contact reduces prejudices' after observing interactions between different ethnic groups in factories, schools, and the military.[9] Later, Deutsch and Collins et al. used an experimental design to compare the differences in interactions and attitudes between residents of racially integrated (Black people and white people living together) and racially segregated neighborhoods. They found that people living in integrated neighborhoods experienced positive attitudinal changes toward their counterparts, and that stereotypes and hostility decreased significantly with increased frequency of contact.[10] Building on two prior studies, major 'contact' theorist Gordon Allport put forward the conditional 'Contact Hypothesis' in 1954, mentioning that only after meeting four conditions will contacts be conducive to breaking down inter-group prejudices: institutional support, equal status, the pursuit of superordinate goals, and cooperation.[11] Since then, several studies on different student groups and ethnic and religious groups have confirmed that contact can indeed ameliorate the negative attitudes of members of our group towards other groups.[12]

In cross-strait studies, many scholars have also used direct contact to explain changes in intergroup attitudes. For example, Keng Shu et al. conducted a study on Taiwanese students who went to China for short-term exchanges and found that although contact did not change their original identity, it did change their impression of mainland China.[13] A tracking study by Wang on 538 young Taiwanese who had been to mainland China found that their exchanges there had an impact on their attitudes toward unification and independence.[14] Lin's study of Taiwanese businessmen in China found that compared to their counterparts in Guangdong, Taiwanese businessmen in Shanghai were

[8]George A Kranton and Rachel E Kranton, 'Economics and Identity', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 115, No. 3 (2000), p. 717.

[9]Robin M Williams Jr, *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1947).

[10]Deutsch, M. and Collins, M., *Interracial Housing: A Psychological Evaluation of a Social Experiment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951).

[11]Allport, G. W., The Nature of Prejudice (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954).

[12]Amir, Y, 'The Role of Intergroup Contact in Change or Prejudice and Ethnic Relations' in P. A. Katz (ed), Towards the Elimination of Racism (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1976), pp. 245–308; Miller, N. and Brewer, M. B., Groups in Contact: The Psychology of Desegregation (New York: Academic Press, 1984); Pettigrew, T. F., 'The Contact Hypothesis Was Revisited' in M. Hewstone and R. Brown (eds), Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 169–195; Stephan, W. G., 'The Contact Hypothesis in Intergroup Relations' in C. Hendricks (ed), Group Processes and Intergroup Relations (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), pp. 13–40.

[13]Keng Shu and Zeng Yuchen, 'The Political Impact of the CCP's Youth Policy of Inviting Visitors to Taiwan', *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2010), pp. 29–70.

[14]Chia-Chou Wang, 'Do Cross-Polity Contacts Change Policy Preferences? Using the Attitudes of Taiwanese Student Delegations Visiting Mainland China towards Unification—independence as an Example', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2022), pp. 501–526.

likelier to become friends with the locals because contacts between Taiwanese in Shanghai and the locals fulfilled Allport's four conditions, especially 'equal status/class'.[15]

However, the effect of direct contact is still questioned within current academic discourse. First, contact does not always yield positive outcomes. More frequent contact can sometimes lead to adverse effects.[16] Second, there is no academic consensus on the conditions under which contact can effectively reduce intergroup prejudices. A meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp of 515 existing studies of intergroup contact found that contact can eliminate prejudices even if the conditions suggested by Allport are not met.[17] Finally, not everyone in two opposing groups has the opportunity or desire to engage in intergroup contact, especially in cross-political entities where large-scale direct contact is difficult to achieve.

Extended Contact

Wright et al. have recently proposed the extended contact hypothesis. They argue that every ingroup member does not need to be in contact with the outgroup for prejudices to be reduced. Instead, merely knowing of or observing at least one ingroup member who has a close relationship with one or more outgroup members can have beneficial effects on relations between groups.[18] There have been some longitudinal studies that have provided evidence consistent with the hypothesized effect of extended contact on the change in outgroup attitudes.[19] Some studies have also demonstrated that extended contact has a causal effect on prejudice reduction.[20]

So, how does extended contact change the attitudes of ingroup members toward the outgroup? Scholars point out that anxiety reduction, reducing ignorance, inclusion of other in self are three key mechanisms. First, in anxiety reduction, Wright et al. argue that having observed a positive relationship between members of the ingroup and the outgroup should reduce fears and negative expectations in the observer, leading to a more positive impression of the outgroup and perhaps even to actual positive interactions with the outgroup that would permit direct contact effects to operate.[21]

Second, in reducing ignorance, scholars argue that through direct communication with the observer, the ingroup member could provide information about the outgroup. Ignorance of the outgroup's subjective culture can lead to misperception, misinterpretations, misattribution, as well as fear of interacting with the outgroup.[22]

Last, in inclusion of other in self, from a social psychological perspective, the process of this 'transferring intimacy' is as follows: the ingroup member is part of the self, the outgroup member is

[15]Ruihua Lin, Shu Keng and Richard Weixing Hu, 'Class or Identity Matters? The Social Assimilation of Taiwanese Sojourners in China' in Jenn-Hwan Wang (ed), *Crossing the Border in Great China: Production, Community and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 202–218

[16]Zeng Cai, 'Does Contact Improve Intergroup Attitudes? Evidence from Japanese Perceptions of Chinese and South Koreans', *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2025).

[17]Pettigrew & Tropp, 'A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (2006), pp. 751–783.

[18]S. C. Wright, A. Aron, T. McLaughlin-Volpe, and S. A. Ropp, 'The Extended Contact Effect: Knowledge of Cross-Group Friendships and Prejudice', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 73 (1997), pp. 73–90.

[19]O. Christ, M. Hewstone, N. Tausch, Wagner, U., Voci, A., Hughes, J., & Cairns, E., 'Direct Contact Moderates Extended Contact Effects: Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Impact on Outgroup Attitudes, Behavioral Intentions, and Attitude Certainty', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 36 (2010), pp. 1662–1674; Eller, A., Abrams, D., & Zimmermann, A., 'Two Degrees of Separation: A Longitudinal Study of Actual and Perceived Extended International Contact', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 14 (2011), pp. 175–191; Schofield, J. W., Hausmann, L. R. M., Ye, F., & Woods, R. L., 'Intergroup Friendships on Campus: Predicting Close and Casual Friendships Between White and African American First-year College Students', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 13 (2010), pp. 585–602.

[20]Wout, D. A., Murphy, M. C., & Steele, C. M., 'When your friends matter: The effect of White students' racial friendship networks on meta-perceptions and perceived identity', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 46 (2010), pp. 1035–1041.

[21]Wright, S. C., Aron, A., McLaughlin-Volpe, T., & Ropp, S. A., 'The extended contact effect: Knowledge of cross-group friendships and prejudice', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 73 (1997), pp. 73–90.

[22]Triandis, H. C., *The Analysis of Subjective Culture* (Wiley 1972).

part of that ingroup member's self, and hence part of myself.[23] This is an extension of 'my friend's friend is my friend', as demonstrated by Aronson and Cope, to 'my group member's friend's group is my friend'.[24]

The mechanism of extended contact has already been tested in some research. For example, Turner et al'.s study of White British and South Asian university students confirmed that extended contact improved attitudes toward outgroups through mediating variables such as anxiety reduction and inclusion of other in self.[25] Paolini et al. studied Catholics and Protestants and found that recognizing that someone in the group is friends with an outgroup member reduces members' attitudes toward the outgroup.[26] In current cross-strait studies, no related studies have analyzed it from the perspective of extended contact.

Most of the studies on Taiwanese people's attitudes towards China are based on sensual/rational factors. However, these approaches alone cannot explain the observed attitude changes among NQU students. As the cross-strait exchanges increase, attitudinal changes between groups have been explained from the direct contact perspective. They believe individuals must have direct, experiential contact to eliminate prejudices against outgroups. Late extended contact theorists suggest that the attitudes of ingroup members towards an outgroup can shift through the dissemination of experiences from peers who have had direct contact with that outgroup. No existing research has analyzed the effects of cross-strait contact from this perspective. This paper argues that extended contact is a key factor influencing NQU students' attitudes towards China.

Research Methodology

Research Question

This paper explores the Chinese attitudes of students at NQU. NQU, formerly the National Kinmen Institute of Technology, was converted into a university in 2010. Currently, more than 90% of the students at NQU **are from Taiwan and are not from Kinmen**.[27] During their growth, they have experienced political events such as the Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan and the Hong Kong Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement, as well as being politically socialized with Taiwan-based teaching materials, which has led to a generally unfavorable attitude towards China. Interestingly, after spending one to four years in Kinmen, their attitudes towards China differed from those of young people in Taiwan, as evidenced by the following two aspects.

First of all, the students of NQU are more willing to go to the other side of the Taiwan Strait for exchanges. According to the author's survey, 58% of the students of NQU have visited China after coming to Kinmen, and the percentage of those who intend to go there in the future is as high as 74.1%. This percentage is much higher than the 3% found by Global Views Magazine among Taiwan's youth aged 20 to 29 and the 31% found by United Daily News of Taiwan's public.[28]

[23]Sedikides, C., Olsen, N., & Reis, H. T., 'Relationships as Natural Categories', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 64 (1993), pp. 71–82

[24]Aronson, E., & Cope, V., 'My Enemy's Enemy Is My Friend', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 8 (1968), pp. 8–12.

[25]Turner, R. N., Hewstone, M., Voci, A., & Vonofakou, C., 'A Test of the Extended Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: The Mediating Role of Intergroup Anxiety, Perceived Ingroup and Outgroup Norms, and Inclusion of the Outgroup in the Self', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 95 (2008), pp. 843–860.

[26]Paolini, S., Hewstone, M., Cairns, E., & Voci, A., 'Effects of Direct and Indirect Cross-group Friendships on Judgments of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland: The Mediating Role of an Anxiety-reduction Mechanism', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 30, No. 6 (2004), pp. 770–786.

[27]Academic Affairs Office, NQU, accessed: December 19, 2025, https://teach.nqu.edu.tw/p/412-1001-1025.php?Lang=zh-tw; 'Du jinmendaxue dou naxieren? Jinjiu zhugong xianfu buzhu baozeng guoli gaojiao meili' [Who are the students of NQU? Ginmen's Wine, 7000 County Grants Increase Charm of National Higher Education] (May 5, 2024), Global Views, accessed: December 19, 2025, https://city.gvm.com.tw/article/112360

[28]'Yuanjian 2023 taiwan minxin Dongxiang dadiaocha' [Global Views' 2023 Survey on Popular Sentiment in Taiwan] (December 21, 2022), Global Views, accessed: December 19, 2025,https://gvsrc.cwgv.com.tw/articles/index/14880/3; '5 cheng 7 minzhong pan yongyuan weichi xianzhuang' [57% Taiwanese people hope to maintain the status quo forever] (October 2, 2023), United Daily News, accessed: December 19, 2025,https://udn.com/news/story/8625/7477218

Secondly, the likelihood of a cross-strait war, as perceived by the students of NQU, is also much lower than the expectation of the young people in Taiwan. According to a survey conducted by RWNews, the percentage of young people aged 18 to 29 in Taiwan who think a cross-strait war is possible is as high as 75.7%.[29] Only 44.4% of NQU students think a war will likely happen in the next five years.

This brings out the research question of this paper: why does this group of young generation from Taiwan, after spending some time in Kinmen, have a significantly friendlier attitude towards China than their counterparts on the island of Taiwan? This paper hypothesizes that extended contact is the main factor in determining the NQU students' attitudes toward China.

Research Design

This study conducted a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews among full-time first-year and senior NQU students to determine their attitudes towards China. For the sampling design, NQU comprises 17 departments. The author randomly selected two classes from each department and administered the online questionnaires to students in those classes. The survey was conducted from April 1 to 30, 2025, just before the end of the academic year, when first-year students have already spent one year in Kinmen and seniors are about to graduate. A total of 895 valid questionnaires were returned, accounting for one-third of the total enrolled students.[30] The distribution of their basic demographic information is presented in Table 1. For the interviews, a snowball sampling method was adopted to identify participants, resulting in a total of 34 students interviewed. The primary aim of these interviews was to explore. In the current cross-strait environment, how did extended contact influence their attitudes?

In the quantitative research component of this study, the dependent variable is NQU students' attitudes towards China, which are measured from two perspectives. First, their current attitudes towards China are measured by the question, 'What is your overall impression of mainland China?' The options range from 'very negative' to 'very positive' and are coded from 1 to 5, respectively. The second measure was to compare the attitude change towards China after they came to Kinmen. The question is, 'What is the change in your attitudes towards China after you came to Kinmen?' The options are divided into 'change for the worse', 'no change', and 'change for the better', and are coded from 1 to 3, respectively. Due to some missing responses, the sample sizes for these two items differ slightly, with 894 respondents for the former and 893 for the latter. Due to objective constraints, this study could not be conducted on a large scale across geographic regions and time spans, so statistical analyses were conducted based on the 'self-perceived' differences and changes of the respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of sample data for students at NQU

Gender				
	Male		Female	
Number	396		499	
%	44.2		55.8	
Year Level				
	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Number	303	243	228	121
%	33.9	27.2	25.5	13.5

Source: the author.

[29]'18 dao 29 sui nianqingren 7 cheng 6 danxin liangan kaizhan' [76% of young people aged 18 to 29 are worried about a cross-strait war] (April 10, 2023), *RW News*, accessed: December 19, 2025, https://rwnews.tw/article.php?news=8272.

[30]The total population of full-time day students at NQU is 2759 individuals. Please see accessed: December 19, 2025, https://teach.nqu.edu.tw/var/file/1/1001/img/10/113-2.pdf.

Table 2. Distribution of attitudes towards China among the NQU students

Overall impression of China ($N = 894$)				
Very negative	Slightly negative	No opinion	Slightly positive	Very positive
N. 46	252	206	338	52
%. 5.1%	28.2%	23.0%	37.8%	5.8%

Attitude Changes towards China after Coming to Kinmen ($N = 893$)		
Change for the worse	No change	Change for the better
N. 75	480	338
%. 8.4%	53.7%	37.8%

Source: the author.

Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis of the attitudes towards China among the students of NQU. First of all, regarding the overall impression of China, 43.6% are positive, 33.3% are negative, and the remaining 23.1% have no opinion. Compared to the Pew Research Center's survey, 61% of Taiwanese have a negative attitude towards China, while only 35% have a positive attitude.[31] The proportion of university students with a negative attitude towards China is much lower. Secondly, 37.8% of the students' attitudes toward China have changed for the better since they came to Kinmen, 53.9% feel that their attitudes have not changed, and only 8.4% feel that their impression of China has changed for the worse.

In the independent variable section, the extended contact is measured by 'Did the classmates who went to China share positive or negative experiences?' The options are graded from 'mostly negative' to 'mostly positive'. Students were asked about 'Have you been to China after coming to Kinmen?' to find out the direct contact. Sensual and rational factors are listed as control variables. Sensual factors included ethnic origin (Mainlander or Taiwanese), whether the respondent's mother is a Mainlander, inclination towards unification (categorized as pro-independence, maintain the status quo, and pro-unification), self-identity (categorized as Taiwanese, both, and Chinese), and political party identification (categorized as pro-DPP, neutral, and pro-KMT). The rational factor is measured by two questions, namely, 'Does the policy of expanding cross-strait youth exchanges proposed by mainland China benefit you personally?' Moreover, 'Does the policy of granting equal treatment to Taiwanese compatriots proposed by mainland China benefit you personally?' In addition, gender and grade level are also controlled variables.

Analysis of Statistical Results

OLS Models

This section presents an analysis conducted using Ordinary Least Squares. To clarify the effect of extended contact, the authors tested the effect of extended contact alone in each model, then tested direct contact, and finally included both variables. The other factors were control variables. Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis. The first set of models uses 'overall impression of China' as the dependent variable. Model 1 shows that extended contact significantly affects students' impressions of China, with a p-value of $< .001$, while Model 2 shows that the effect of direct contact is not significant. Model 2 showed that the effect of direct contact was not significant. When both variables were included, the effect of extended contact was still significant (model 3). The second set of models uses 'attitude change towards China after coming to Kinmen' as the dependent variable. Model 4.5 shows that both direct contact ($p < .05$) and extended contact ($p < .001$) are statistically significant, but the evidence for extended contact is substantially stronger. When both variables were included, extended contact was still more significant than direct contact (Model 6).

[31]'In Taiwan, Views of Mainland China Mostly Negative' (May 12, 2020), *Pew Research Center*, accessed: December 19, 2025, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/05/12/in-taiwan-views-of-mainland-china-mostly-negative/

Table 3. Regression Model of NQU students' attitudes toward China

	Overall impression of China			Attitude changes towards china after coming to kinmen		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Extended Contact	0.352***			0.170***		
Sharing of classmates who went to China	(0.038)			(0.026)		
Direct Contact		0.061			0.105*	
Been to China after coming to Kinmen (0 = No)		(0.066)			(0.045)	
Extended + Direct			0.355***			0.174***
Extended Contact			(0.038)			(0.026)
Direct Contact			0.094			0.121**
			(0.063)			(0.044)
Rationality						
The impact of 'youth exchanges'	0.235***	0.274***	0.226***	0.155***	0.166***	0.143***
	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.040)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)
The impact of 'granting equal treatment to Taiwanese compatriots'	0.164***	0.189***	0.161***	0.013	0.023	0.009
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Sense						
Ethnic origin	−0.016	0.019	−0.007	−0.102	−0.079	−0.092
(0 = Taiwanese)	(0.089)	(0.093)	(0.089)	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.061)
Respondent's mother is a Mainlander (0 = No)	0.169	0.108	0.156	−0.081	−0.123*	−0.099
	(0.087)	(0.091)	(0.087)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.060)
Inclination towards unification (0 = Pro-independence)	0.518***	0.541***	0.517***	0.098	0.108*	0.096
Maintain the status quo	(0.076)	(0.080)	(0.076)	(0.052)	(0.054)	(0.052)
Pro-unification	0.622***	0.770***	0.642***	0.075	0.163	0.100
	(0.172)	(0.180)	(0.173)	(0.119)	(0.121)	(0.119)
Self-identity	0.286***	0.300***	0.280***	0.067	0.070	0.060
(0 = Taiwanese)	(0.073)	(0.077)	(0.073)	(0.051)	(0.052)	(0.050)
Both	0.215	0.317	0.236	−0.187	−0.120	−0.160
Chinese	(0.212)	(0.222)	(0.212)	(0.146)	(0.150)	(0.146)
Party identification	0.557***	0.569***	0.549***	0.022	0.022	0.012
(0 = Pro-DPP)	(0.104)	(0.109)	(0.104)	(0.072)	(0.073)	(0.072)
Neutral	0.423**	0.402**	0.406**	0.059	0.035	0.036
Pro-KMT	(0.141)	(0.149)	(0.142)	(0.098)	(0.100)	(0.098)
Gender (0 = Female)	−0.233***	−0.208**	−0.217***	0.005	0.030	0.025
	(0.057)	(0.061)	(0.058)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.040)
Grade Level	0.048	0.049	0.034	0.021	0.012	0.004
	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.028)	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Constant	−0.593**	0.436*	−0.585**	0.924***	1.435***	0.935***
	(0.199)	(0.174)	(0.199)	(0.138)	(0.117)	(0.137)
N	894	894	894	893	893	893
Adj. R^2	0.362	0.302	0.363	0.121	0.086	0.128
P	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
S.E.E.	0.833	0.872	0.832	0.575	0.586	0.573

Source: the author.
Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

The statistical results reveal several important findings. First, extended contact consistently showed a highly significant positive effects across all models ($p < .001$). This indicates that Kinmen University students' impressions of China improved after hearing about their classmates' experiences there. Furthermore, this extended contact led to a more positive current impression of China, thereby confirming the hypothesis of this study.

Secondly, direct contact is only significant in the attitude change model, indicating that students who had visited China developed a more positive impression of the mainland. However, contact experiences do not influence students' current impressions of China. This suggests that while direct contact may mitigate prejudices against China, it is insufficient to foster a positive attitude. This also implies that the influence of direct contact is not as robust as hypothesized by the contact theory.

In addition, as a control variable, sensual factors (attitudes toward unification/independence, party affiliation, and identity) did not impact the attitude change. This aligns with the general

understanding of sensual factors, where an individual's initial attitude cannot explain attitude changes. Lastly, rational factors were significant across all models. Among these, the effects of expanding cross-strait youth exchanges were greater than those of granting Taiwanese compatriots equal treatment. This suggests that mainland China's policies benefiting Taiwan influence students' attitudes toward China.

Examination of Mediating Mechanisms

The previous section established that extended contact is a primary factor influencing NQU students' attitudes toward China. Drawing upon the literature review in Section 2, extended contact is hypothesized to influence ingroup members' attitudes toward outgroups primarily through three mechanisms: anxiety reduction, reducing ignorance, and inclusion of other in self. Therefore, this section examines whether extended contact, in the context of current cross-strait relations, influences students' attitudes toward China via these mechanisms, with these mechanisms serving as mediating variables.

Corresponding to the three mechanisms mentioned above, the author posed questions such as: 'Does listening to descriptions from classmates who have visited mainland China reduce your anxiety about future contact with mainland Chinese people?', 'Does listening to descriptions from classmates who have visited mainland China increase your understanding of mainland China?', and 'Seeing classmates who went to mainland China become friends with local people, would you also want to make friends with local people?'

Baron and Kenny suggest estimating three models to examine whether a variable has a mediating effect.[32] The first model assesses the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable; specifically, the influence of extended contact on attitudes toward China, which was already confirmed in Table 3. The second model examines the impact of the independent variable on the mediating variables, as shown in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, extended contact significantly affects anxiety reduction, ignorance reduction, and inclusion of other in self, fulfilling Baron and Kenny's requirements. Based on significance and coefficients, extended contact had the most significant impact on reducing ignorance, with a coefficient of 0.209. Its impact on anxiety reduction was the smallest, with a coefficient of only 0.076, indicating that students' lack of understanding about China outweighs their fear. Inclusion of other in self, generally considered the most challenging to achieve, ranked second with a coefficient of 0.174, suggesting students hold a positive attitude and relatively high willingness to view mainland Chinese people as part of their ingroup.

The third model simultaneously includes both the independent and mediating variables. In this scenario, if the independent variable becomes non-significant, it indicates a 'full mediating' effect. If the independent variable remains significant but its coefficient is smaller than before, it suggests a 'partial mediating' effect. Table 5 simultaneously incorporates extended contact and three mediating mechanisms. In terms of significance, extended contact remains significant in both Tables 5 and 3 (Comparing Model 3 and Model 6) ($p < .001$), showing no change. However, a closer look at the coefficients reveals a difference. In Table 3, the coefficients for extended contact were 0.355 in Model 3 and 0.174 in Model 6. In contrast, these coefficients are all lower in Table 5. This reduction indicates that anxiety reduction, ignorance reduction, and inclusion of other in self have a 'partial' mediating effect on students' attitudes toward China.

Through statistical models, this section confirms that extended contact has a significant effect on NQU students' attitudes toward China, both in terms of their current overall impression of China and their attitudinal changes after coming to Kinmen. In addition, this section confirms that extended contact affects students' attitudes toward China through three mechanisms: anxiety reduction, ignorance reduction, and inclusion of other in self.

[32]Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A., 'The Moderator—mediator Variable Distinction in Social Psychological Research: Conceptual, Strategic, and Statistical Considerations', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 51, No. 6 (1986), pp. 1173–1182.

Table 4. The impact of extended contact on the three mechanisms

	Anxiety reduction	Ignorance reduction	Inclusion of other in self
Extended Contact	0.076 (0.028)**	0.209 (0.042)***	0.174 (0.027)***
Sharing of classmates who went to China			
Direct Contact	0.012 (0.046)	0.157 (0.070) *	0.113 (0.044) *
Been to China after coming to Kinmen (0 = No)			
Rationality	0.047 (0.029)	0.200 (0.044) ***	0.227 (0.028) ***
The impact of 'youth exchanges'			
The impact of 'granting equal treatment to Taiwanese compatriots'	0.012 (0.023)	0.091 (0.036) *	0.052 (0.023) *
Sense	−0.036(0.065)	−0.060(0.098)	−0.018(0.062)
Ethnic origin			
(0 = Taiwanese)			
Respondent's mother is a Mainlander (0 = No)	−0.106 (0.063)	−0.495 (0.096) ***	−0.066 (0.061)
Inclination towards unification	0.046 (0.055)	0.034 (0.084)	0.039 (0.053)
(0 = Pro-independence)	0.096 (0.125)	0.039 (0.190)	0.185 (0.121)
Maintain the status quo			
Pro-unification			
Self-identity	−0.008 (0.053)	0.016 (0.081)	0.021 (0.051)
(0 = Taiwanese)	0.035 (0.154)	−0.204 (0.234)	−0.113 (0.149)
Both			
Chinese			
Party identification	0.027 (0.075)	−0.174 (0.115)	0.012(0.073)
(0 = Pro-DPP)	−0.119 (0.103)	−0.263 (0.156)	0.046(0.099)
Neutral			
Pro-KMT			
Gender (0 = Female)	−0.002 (0.042)	−0.100 (0.064)	−0.002 (0.041)
Grade Level	0.029 (0.020)	0.047 (0.031)	−0.026 (0.020)
Constant	1.412 (0.144)***	0.467 (0.220)*	0.707 (0.139)***
N	894	894	894
Adj. R^2	0.015	0.124	0.203
p	< 0.05	< 0.001	< 0.001
S.E.E.	0.601	0.918	0.582

Source: the author.
Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

Qualitative Supplement: How Does extended Contact exert Its Influence in the context of Cross-Strait Reality?

The former section used statistics to prove three mechanisms influence students' attitudes towards China. The question then arises: In the context of cross-strait reality, how do these mechanisms manifest among Kinmen University students, and subsequently, how do they influence their attitudes towards China? Qualitative interviews supplement this section to provide more information. For the interviews, a snowball sampling method was adopted to identify participants, resulting in a total of 34 students interviewed.

Reducing Negative Impressions

Firstly, corresponding to the mechanism of anxiety reduction, is the reduction of negative impressions. Generally speaking, Taiwanese people's negative impressions of China are mainly due to the currently strained cross-strait relationship and the authoritarian rule of the Chinese government and its suppression of Taiwan. This is related to the tense cross-strait relations in Taiwan after the DPP came to power. The Taiwan government and the press in Taiwan have focused on highlighting the authoritarian aspects of the CCP's regime, such as the implementation of the national security law in Hong Kong, the Xinjiang cotton incident, and the revision of the 'Counter Espionage Law'. Recently,

Table 5. Regression analysis of mediating effects

	Model 1 Overall impression of China			Model 2 Attitude changes towards china after coming to Kinmen		
Extended contact	0.342*** (0.038)	0.327*** (0.038)	0.292*** (0.038)	0.163*** (0.026)	0.142*** (0.026)	0.136*** (0.026)
Anxiety reduction	0.178*** (0.046)			0.139*** (0.032)		
Ignorance reduction		0.135*** (0.030)			0.151*** (0.020)	
Inclusion of other in self			0.361*** (0.047)			0.216*** (0.032)
Direct Contact	0.092 (0.063)	0.072 (0.063)	0.053 (0.061)	0.119** (0.043)	0.096 (0.042)	0.096* (0.043)
Rationality						
The impact of 'youth exchanges'	0.218*** (0.040)	0.199*** (0.040)	0.144*** (0.040)	0.136*** (0.028)	0.112*** (0.027)	0.094** (0.028)
The impact of 'granting equal treatment to Taiwanese compatriots'	0.158*** (0.032)	0.148*** (0.032)	0.142*** (0.031)	0.007 (0.022)	−0.005 (0.022)	−0.003 (0.022)
Sense						
ethnic origin	−0.001 (0.089)	0.001 (0.088)	−0.001 (0.086)	−0.087 (0.061)	−0.083 (0.060)	−0.088 (0.060)
Respondent's mother is a Mainlander (0 = No)	0.175* (0.087)	0.222* 0.088)	0.179* (0.085)	−0.084 (0.060)	−0.024 (0.059)	−0.085 (0.059)
Inclination towards unification(0 = Pro-independence)	0.508***	0.512***	0.503***	0.090	0.091	0.088
Maintain the status quo	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.074)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Pro-unification	0.625*** (0.171)	0.636*** (0.171)	0.575** (0.167)	0.086 (0.118)	0.094 (0.115)	0.060 (0.116)
Self-identity						
Both	0.282*** (0.073)	0.278*** (0.072)	0.273*** (0.071)	0.061 (0.050)	0.057 (0.049)	0.056 (0.049)
Chinese	0.230 (0.211)	0.264 (0.210)	0.277 (0.206)	−0.164 (0.145)	−0.129 (0.142)	−0.135 (0.143)
Party identification						
Neutral	0.544*** (0.103)	0.572*** (0.103)	0.545*** (0.101)	0.008 (0.071)	0.039 (0.070)	0.010 (0.070)
Pro-KMT	0.427** (0.141)	0.441** (0.141)	0.389** (0.137)	0.053 (0.097)	0.076 (0.095)	0.027 (0.095)
Gender	−0.216*** (0.058)	−0.203*** (0.058)	−0.216*** (0.056)	0.026 (0.040)	0.041 (0.039)	0.026 (0.039)
Grade Level	0.029 (0.028)	0.028 (0.028)	0.044 (0.027)	0.000 (0.019)	−0.003 (0.0190	0.010 (0.019)
Constant	−0.836*** (0.208)	−0.648** (0.198)	−0.840 (0.196)	0.738*** (0.143)	0.865*** (0.133)	0.782 (0.136)
N	894	894	894	893	893	893
Adj. R^2	0.373	0.377	0.403	0.146	0.178	0.169
p	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
S.E.E.	0.826	0.823	0.806	0.567	0.556	0.559

Source: the author.
Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$. Values in parentheses are standard errors.

the Lai Ching-Te administration explicitly labeled China as a 'hostile force'.[33] In response, the CCP has been exerting increasing military and international pressure on Taiwan, including frequent military exercises and the crossing of the center line of the Taiwan Strait by military aircraft. These factors have made Taiwanese people reluctant, or even fearful, to go to China.

However, the students' perception of China is closer to reality because they have many opportunities for extended contact with China. Through the descriptions of their peers, teachers, or

[33]'Lai Ching-Te: Zhongguo shi Taiwan jingwai de didui shili' [Lai Ching-Te: China is the overseas hostile force against Taiwan] (March 13, 2025), *United Daily News*, accessed: December 19, 2025, https://udn.com/news/story/124413/8605593.

Kinmen locals who have been to China, Students realized that life there was not as scary as the press had made it out to be:

> *My friend went to Xiamen and said he did not feel he would be arrested at any time, as reported in Taiwan. He used his mobile phone to watch the news in Taiwan on the Xiamen metro and talked about the bad things about Xi Jinping, thinking he would be arrested, but he was not. He chatted with local taxi drivers about politics and cross-strait differences and felt it was very liberal in China. (June 4, 2025)*

I got my impression of China from the press, and my family always watchhome was run by FTV (pro-independence media). After coming to Kinmen, I have changed from a strong dislike and fear of China to an understanding of this regime. My fear was because I did not know anything about it. After listening to the classmates who went there, I realized there is a discrepancy between reality and what the press has reported. (1 June 2025)

Although eliminating negative prejudices does not immediately make students feel good about China, at least it does not exclude them from learning about China. Many students have even shifted from a stance of absolute non-contact to a willingness to visit mainland China. The students interviewed above all said, 'There must be a reason why they love to go there so much, and I also want to see what China is like, instead of relying on the press to get information', 'I used to be afraid of being arrested, but I do not worry about that now'. Evidently, the reduction of negative impressions also reduces anxiety about China (including fear, hostility, anger, etc.), confirming the first mechanism proposed by Wright.

Reconstructing the Imagination of China

Secondly, corresponding to the mechanism of reducing ignorance, is the reconstruction of the 'imagination of China'. Among NQU students, some harbor no prejudice against China but also have no interest in learning more. China, for them, is merely an irrelevant outgroup. However, as the number of peers who have visited increases, the China experience subtly emerges as a 'trend', prompting students who were initially uninterested in China to develop a desire to 'go and see China for themselves', and even to form unrealistic 'imaginings' about the local area.

This is because most of the things that students who have been there shared were fun and tasty things about the place. As in the case of people traveling abroad, regardless of the experience, most of the content shared is positive. This is quite appealing to those students who have not yet visited:

> *I made Instagram stories of what I ate and played so that my Taiwanese friends thought it was fun to be in China once they saw my posts. I've been to China nine times in a year, and I'm very interested in Chinese history and culture, pop culture, fashion, and make-up. (June 8, 2025)*

> *Many students in my class attended exchange programs or traveled there, and I heard nothing but positive comments. Even if the students who went there were pro-independence, they still became good friends with the mainland Chinese. There must be a reason why they love to go there so much, making me fantasize about the place. Everything is perfect there, so I would like to see it on my own. (5 June 2025)*

Through extended contact, those who have been to China construct a new 'China Imagination' for those who have not been there. In this imagination, China is fascinating, diverse, and multi-faceted. The local people are friendly, warm, and no different from us. However, because the 'fantasies' were too good, these students usually felt disappointed and 'revised' their views on mainland China after they had the chance to go there. Below are the comments from a few students:

> *After the contact, my impression of China changed from subjective to objective. Before I went there, I had a fantasy about China, thinking that it was very good, but after I went there, I realized that there were still many problems. For example, during the summer holiday when I went on exchange, a student jumped off a building but was suppressed by the school. All these experiences have combined to make me more and more wary of mainland China. (June 3, 2025*

Interviews revealed that, compared to political socialization or information gained from the press, extended contact appears to have a greater impact on students. This is because these experiences are proximate (happening to acquaintances), concrete, and even collective. When peers' contact experiences consistently lean positive, students who have not visited are prone to forming an overly idealized imagination of China. This finding is quite insightful: while extended contact, to some extent, reduces ingroup members' ignorance of the outgroup, it can also construct an alternative, detached-from-reality imagination for those without direct contact experience.

Aspiration to Form Cross-Border Friendships

Third, corresponding to the mechanism of inclusion of other in self is the aspiration to form cross-border friendships. Inclusion of other in self refers to when someone in our group develops a close relationship with an individual outside the group; the other members of the group will transfer this intimacy to themselves. This manifests in real life as: when students observe their peers developing close relationships with mainlanders (as friends or romantic partners), they also aspire to establish cross-border friendships. The effect is significantly pronounced when intimacy occurs with the opinion leader in the group (e.g. a club leader or high achiever) or a close friend of the respondent.

One of the respondents is a top-ranked female student who went on exchange to a Chinese university and had a relationship with a mainland Chinese student. After returning to NQU, she and her boyfriend kept pushing each other for the better. She is still at the top of her class and plans to go abroad with her mainland boyfriend to study in a graduate school. Since this girl was already the center of attention in her class, her interaction with her mainland boyfriend positively impacted her academics, making her the envy of the rest of the class.

Generally speaking, Taiwanese people generally have a discriminatory view of Mainlanders, but the students of NQU feel that the distance between them and the people on the other side of the Taiwan Strait has been narrowed when they see that their classmates have made friends with people of the opposite gender from mainland China. Some of them have gone on to dating websites to meet mainland Chinese of the opposite gender.

Apart from romantic relationships, when some people in the group become good friends with Mainlanders, it also triggers the rest of the individuals of the group to make friends with young people on the other side of the Taiwan Strait:

> *My classmate went to Xiamen for an exchange and made many local friends, and now he/she goes to Xiamen every month to have dinner and drink with those friends, and the vibe is excellent; I think it is great. (June 12, 2025)*

The pro-independence students in my class have become good friends with the mainland Chinese. People with different political stances can become friends. In the past, I was influenced by the press in Taiwan, so I did not really want to get to know mainland China, but now I want to get to know the people there. (5 June 2025)

In fact, past polls show that Taiwanese people's favorability towards Chinese people is significantly higher than towards the Chinese government.[34] In recent years, the proportion of those with a good impression of Chinese people has even surpassed those with a bad impression.[35] In other words, from a societal perspective, Taiwanese people do not harbor overly negative prejudices against mainlanders. From the perspective of young people, they are full of curiosity and a sense of novelty towards mainland students. Therefore, when classmates share/show off their close relationships with mainlanders, it often evokes envy in those who have not had such experiences, consequently fostering a desire to develop cross-border friendships.

[34]Chung-Li Wu, '2018 Research on the China Image (C00338)' [data file] (2022), *Survey Research Data Archive*, Academia Sinica, accessed 19 December, 2025, https://doi.org/10.6141/TW-SRDA-C00338-1.

[35]'2020 liangan guanxi niandu dadiaocha' [2020 Annual Survey on Cross-Strait Relations] (September 28, 2020), *United Daily News*, accessed 19 December, 2025, https://udn.com/news/story/8625/4893615.

In summary, this section utilizes interview data to supplement how the three mechanisms of extended contact-anxiety reduction, reducing ignorance, and inclusion of other in self-exert their influence in the context of cross-strait realities. The interviews revealed that, in the current cross-strait context, these three mechanisms correspond respectively to 'reducing negative impressions (of China)', 'reconstructing the imagination of China', and 'aspiring to establish cross-border friendships'.

Conclusion

With the current tense cross-strait relations, Taiwanese people generally have a more negative perception of China, except in Kinmen. Interestingly, after spending a few years in Kinmen, more than 90% of NQU students coming from Taiwan had their attitudes towards China different from that of young people in Taiwan. From an outsider's point of view, there is indeed a unique 'Kinmen atmosphere' in Kinmen, in which China is the subject of daily discussions. Food, fashion, entertainment, and the places locals visit and travel to are all related to China. However, how can it affect the attitude of young people in Taiwan towards China?

This paper explores the factors that influence the attitudes of NQU students towards China, including their general impression of China at present and their change of attitude after coming to Kinmen, with NQU students as the subject of this study. The study finds that extended contact is the critical factor. In Kinmen, lots of locals and NQU students have been to China. Those who had not been to China would adjust their attitudes towards China after hearing what they had seen or shared with others and realizing that China was not as negative as the press reports.

Through the interviews, this paper further finds that 'in the current cross-strait reality, extended contact influences students' attitudes through three mechanisms: 'reducing negative impressions (of China)', 'reconstructing the imagination of China', and 'aspiring to establish cross-border friendships'. Among these, the impact of the second mechanism is most insightful: while extended contact, to some extent, reduces ingroup members' ignorance of the outgroup, it can also construct an overly idealized 'imagination of China' for those without direct contact experience.

Prior research on Taiwanese people's attitudes toward China has been analyzed in terms of static rational and sensual factors or direct contact. In this paper, we demonstrate through empirical research the alternative argument that mere extended contact can change Taiwanese attitudes towards China. Moreover, the influence exerted by such 'hearing from familiar others' surpasses that of direct interpersonal contact. This finding contributes a novel analytical perspective to the study of cross-Strait relations. However, why extended contact exerts a stronger influence than direct contact remains insufficiently understood and requires further empirical investigation.

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Research Ethics and Informed Consent Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human participants. Participation in the questionnaire and interviews was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. All data were collected anonymously or de-identified, used solely for academic research, and kept confidential. Completion of the questionnaire or participation in the interview indicates that informed consent was obtained.