Dividing without Conquering: Generation, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in Taiwan's 2016 Presidential Election

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Based on the literature about the role of rising nationalism in recent world politics, this paper proposes a nationalism-oriented causal model to explain the voting choices of different social groups. With an interest-identity framework, this generic model is applied to Taiwan's 2016 presidential election to examine whether and to what extent 11 causal mechanisms influence the voting choices of four groups defined by generation, class, and ethnicity. The findings not only reveal generational, class-based, and ethnic differences in Taiwanese voting behavior; they also show that the election was largely one of identity politics centered around the issues of national identity and democratic identification, making the "interest card" played by Beijing less effective in swaying voter choices. This explains why Beijing's divide-and-conquer economic policy successfully divided Taiwanese voters but failed in the end to prevent the pro-independence candidate from winning the election. The findings also indicate that the economic concerns of voters promoted both their Taiwanese identity and support for Taiwan independence, while identification with Taiwan's democracy contributed directly to the former and only indirectly to the latter. Overall, the model presents a more fine-grained analysis of nationalist politics and may be applied to the studies of other political behaviors involving nationalism.

KEYWORDS: Generation; class; ethnicity; Taiwan; nationalism.

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How does nationalism shape politics? While recent studies have paid increasing attention to the roles of nationalism in politics, they have yet to provide a sufficient systematic examination of the causal mechanisms underlying the political actions driven by it. This paper aims to systematically examine the causal mechanisms behind voting and other political actions involving nationalism among different social groups. In the literature about the role of growing nationalism in recent world politics, three broad research questions have received great attention. First, what type of national identity and nationalism contributes to significant changes in politics and public opinion? For example, general national identity (Fligstein, Polyakova, & Sandholtz, 2012), ethnic and civic national identity (Veg, 2017), economic nationalism (Colantone & Stanig, 2018), and populist nationalism (López-Alves & Johnson, 2019) have all been identified as important factors contributing to the rise of the far right and populist and nationalist politicians in Europe and the United States (Corbett & Walker, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), rising popular resistance against immigration and European integration (Fligstein *et al.*, 2012; Green, Sarrasin, Fasel, & Staerklé, 2011; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), and the rapid growth of both the independence movement in Taiwan and the self-determination/democratic movement in Hong Kong (Qi, 2013; Veg, 2017).

Second, what factors have promoted or constrained the recent rise of nationalism in world politics? Factors that have been studied include economic/interest factors of globalization such as trade, investment, and employment (Chen, 2014; Colantone & Stanig, 2018; Lan & Li, 2015; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Qi, 2013), cultural/value/identity factors such as language (Green *et al.*, 2011), liberal, progressive, multicultural and democratic values (Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Veg, 2017), and identity issues (Bogdanor, 2016). Third, which social groups are more likely to be nationalist? Logically, those who have been significantly influenced by factors found in the studies of the latter question tend to support nationalism. In terms of economic/interest factors, workers who are less educated or skilled and other economically disadvantaged groups are more likely to support nationalist candidates, parties, and policies in elections and referendums (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). In terms of cultural/value/identity factors, culturally conservative groups such as older generations in mature democracies such as western European countries tend to be more nationalistic (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). In the new democracy of Taiwan and hybrid regime of Hong Kong, however, it was younger generations and other more liberal groups that showed a stronger nationalism against Beijing, mainly due to its perceived threat to their societies.

While the existing literature has greatly improved our understanding of the aforementioned three topics, most studies focus on one or two of them separately and
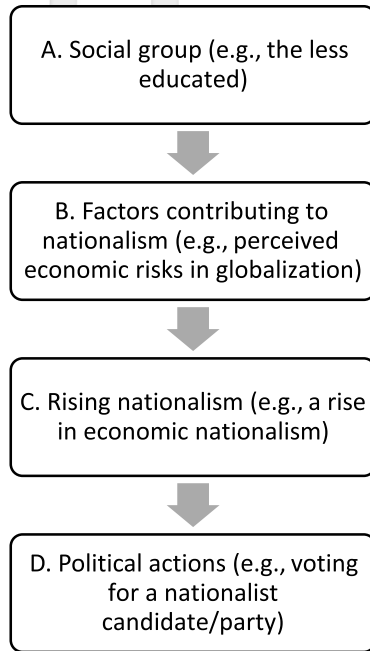
Figure 1. A nationalism-oriented causal model for the political actions of social groups.

lack a coherent analytical framework to integrate all three.[1] Our study attempts to integrate the three topics with a simple causal model. It is not hard to detect the possible causal chain connecting the three topics. From the third to the first question, the initial variable is a social group (versus the reference group) defined by a social cleavage such as education level in which the less educated are compared to the better educated. The outcome variable is political change in the form of the rise of a nationalist candidate in an election as a result of voting or other political actions of the social group in question. The second question regarding the factors contributing to the rise of nationalism provides mediator variables between the initial and outcome variables that connect the studied social group with their political actions through nationalism mechanisms. The simplest version of this causal model may be illustrated by Figure 1. One possible example following this causal chain might be that less educated workers (A in Figure 1) perceive higher economic risks in globalization (B) which increases their nationalism (C), and consequently, makes them more likely to vote for a nationalist candidate (D).

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[1]One impressive exception is that of Norris and Inglehart (2019).

This generic model may be applied to countries where nationalism plays an important role in politics. In general, it may answer the research question of how different social cleavages influence the political actions of individuals through the mechanism of nationalism. For specific cases such as Taiwan, the research questions to be answered by the model are case-specific and dependent on unique political, economic, and social conditions. In the subsequent sections, we first present the political, economic, and social context in which Taiwan's 2016 presidential election took place, which will bring about specific research questions to be answered by the model. Second, we operationalize the model with an interest-identity framework to hypothesize 11 causal mechanisms that account for the voting choices of four social groups. Third, we examine the causal mechanisms and analyze the findings from three perspectives. Finally, we conclude the study by discussing its contributions, implications, and limitations.

Taiwan's 2016 Presidential Election: Nationalism, the Economy, and Identification with Democracy

On January 16, 2016, the chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan's main opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the presidential election with 56.1% of the vote to become Taiwan's first female president. Incumbent Kuomintang (KMT) party chairman Eric Chu and People First Party (PFP) chairman James Soong were defeated by large margins. The biggest puzzle in this presidential election was why Ma's liberal China policy that had supposedly contributed so much to his re-election in 2012 had become a liability for the KMT in 2016. The answer most likely lies in the economy. Taiwan's economy experienced much slower growth in Ma's second term than in his first one. Various livelihood difficulties remained or even deteriorated, especially among the youth (Beckershoff, 2017). This significantly damaged the credibility of Ma's policies that viewed China as a means to save Taiwan's economy.

One deeper reason is the continuous rise of Taiwanese nationalism. Some surveys show that the percentage of people who identified themselves as Taiwanese rose moderately from 48.4% to 52.2% in Ma's first term of 2008–2011, but rose to 59% in the first half of 2015 during his second term. In contrast, the percentage of people who identified themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese were on a constant decline from 43.1% to 33.7% (Election Study Center, 2016). As the major leader behind the DPP's revival since 2008, Tsai moderated the party's China policy by accepting all "status quo" relations that included the significantly improved economic relations with China

achieved by the Ma administration from 2008 to 2015. Nevertheless, she still rejected the "1992 consensus" that was based on the one-China principle endorsed by the KMT and Beijing. This delicate balance between economic pragmatism and Taiwanese nationalism reflects Taiwanese society's dual preferences regarding cross-Strait relations: the gaining of economic benefits while avoiding political risks, both of which have been associated with improved relations with China. In the context of a rise in Taiwanese nationalism since 2012, Tsai's "status quo" China policy seemed acceptable to most voters.

Livelihood issues and the rise of Taiwanese nationalism had gradually pushed the majority of voters towards accepting the DPP's counterargument against Ma's liberal China policy. According to a public opinion poll in June 2014, a respective 62.9% and 73.4% of voters agreed with the DPP's two negative evaluations of improved cross-Strait economic relations: that only a small minority had benefitted from cross-Strait economic and trade agreements, and that Taiwan's economy was greatly over-dependent on China (Taiwan Thinktank, 2014). This public view is a stark contrast to perceptions in a 2011 survey which showed that 56.5% of voters had a positive view of cross-Strait economic relations before Ma's re-election (Wu, 2012). Through significantly improved economic relations with Taiwan, Beijing had apparently aimed to divide not only Taiwanese society but also the DPP camp by offering various economic benefits and then turning those who enjoyed the benefits into pro-Beijing voters who would support the KMT in elections. The rising nationalism and public dissatisfaction with cross-Strait relations during Ma's second term was indicative of the failure of this divide-and-conquer strategy.

Therefore, both nationalism and the economy have been closely related to the issue of improving cross-Strait relations (Wu, 2012), and it is likely that both made a significant contribution to Tsai's victory in the presidential election. The third possible contributing factor might be an affinity among voters for Taiwan's democratic government and society,[2] a fact which may have helped them distinguish between the DPP and KMT and between Taiwan and China. Simply put, many voters saw the DPP and Taiwan as more pro-democracy than the KMT and China. Therefore, those with a greater affinity for Taiwan's democratic values may have been more likely to support the DPP and Taiwanese nationalism while opposing the KMT and China. It was demonstrative that the 2014 anti-KMT and anti-Beijing Sunflower Movement was premised on the belief that the Ma administration's negotiations with Beijing had been

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[2]Most studies on how different social groups identify with democracy have yet to explore the impact of this identification on their voting choices. See (Lin, 2015) for a thorough summary of these studies.

nontransparent and that the KMT had tried to pass the cross-Strait Service and Trade Agreement in the Legislative Yuan through undemocratic means. Indeed, the most popular narrative of the movement which effectively united a variety of social movement organizations was mainly one of transparency and democratic values (Beckershoff, 2017).

Research Questions, Theoretical Framework, and Operationalization of the Model

The existing literature has found that in terms of the three major social cleavages of generation, class, and ethnicity in Taiwan's electoral politics, younger generations (Lin, 2015; Liu, 1994; Sheng, 2002), less privileged groups such as farmers and blue-collar workers, and the Hoklo were more likely than older generations, privileged groups, Hakka and Waishengren to support Taiwanese nationalism and the DPP, respectively (Chen & Keng, 2009; Lin, 2015; Qi, 2013). Were these groups more likely to vote for Tsai in the 2016 presidential election as well? If so, did the three factors of the economy, nationalism, and identification with Taiwan's democracy cause them to vote for Tsai, and if so, in what ways? Previous studies have normally explored the independent effect of these factors on the choices of Taiwanese voters with linear or logistic regression models, leaving two important questions unanswered. First, what are the causal relations among the three factors in contributing to voting choices? Furthermore, are the causal mechanisms formed by the three factors behind the voting choices of every social group, or working only among some?

To answer these questions, we operationalize the proposed causal model (Figure 1) with the interest-identity framework. Specifically, it is a series of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) which has been widely used to test assumptions of causality (Bollen & Pearl, 2013, pp. 301–328). Interest and identity are two sets of broad factors used by many scholars to account for various political actions and public attitudes such as voting choices, participation in protests, attitudes towards immigrants and foreigners, and so on (Bogdanor, 2016; Chen, Keng, Tu, & Huang, 2009; Hooghe & Marks, 2004; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). Interest factors normally indicate a voter's economic concerns about the interests of the nation, community, family, or self, driving one to support the candidate who can improve or protect the economic interests. Identity factors generally indicate a voter's cultural, religious, ideological or partisan values, beliefs, identity, or ideas which are not necessarily related to one's economic interests but could sway a voter towards

supporting the candidate who shares the same values, beliefs, identity, or ideas. In general, existing studies have found that both interests and identity factors influence the behavior of Taiwanese voters, particularly when popular issues in the elections are related to cross-Strait relations (Chen & Keng, 2009; Qi, 2013; Wu, 2005, 2012). A collection of recent studies of Taiwanese voters has emphasized the primary role of identity factors such as party identification, national identity, ethnic identity, and attitudes toward independence and unification in determining voting behavior. According to these studies, these identities have not only significantly influenced the choices of Taiwanese voters but have also greatly shaped their evaluation of the impact of changing cross-Strait relations on their economic interests (Achen & Wang, 2017).

The dataset of Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study 2016 (TEDS2016) provides ideal variables for us to operationalize the model with the interest-identity framework.[3] We use two TEDS2016 survey questions to evaluate the respective impact of improved cross-Strait economic relations since 2008 on the economic fortunes of Taiwan and the individual respondents to indicate their economic concerns. Therefore, the latent variable of economic interest in the proposed SEM is measured by these two observable variables. We argue that a stronger negative view of the impact of improved cross-Strait relations increases the likelihood of voting for Tsai, who shares the same negative views.

The two identity variables in this study are an identification with Taiwan's democratic values and Taiwanese nationalism. To measure identification with Taiwanese democracy, three survey questions were asked: (1) how democratic is Taiwan today? (2) how satisfied are you with Taiwan's democracy? and (3) to what extent do you agree that most politicians are trustworthy (Chen, 2003; Wang & Shun, 2003)[4]? We argue that the stronger one's identification with Taiwanese democracy, the more likely one will vote for Tsai, the head of a party that has been promoting democratization in Taiwan since its establishment.

In existing studies, Taiwanese nationalism is typically indicated by a Taiwanese identity and a favorable attitude toward Taiwanese independence in general or under

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[3]The multi-year project TEDS is coordinated by Professor Chi Huang of National Chengchi University. TEDS2016 is a yearly project on elections and government satisfaction, and the Presidential and Legislative Elections Survey is conducted every four years before and after elections. Professor Huang was the principal investigator for the 2016 survey. The Election Study Center of National Chengchi University is responsible for data distribution. The authors appreciate the assistance of Professor Huang and the institute for the data provided. The authors are solely responsible for the views expressed herein. TEDS2016 was conducted through face-to-face interviews after the 2016 presidential election. The survey collected information from respondents that included their backgrounds, voting choices, and views on popular public issues.

[4]Both of the papers have shown that political trust was significantly and positively correlated with an identification with democracy among Taiwanese voters.

different conditions (Wu, 2012; Qi, 2013). However, those who identify as Taiwanese do not necessarily support Taiwanese independence, as TEDS2016 shows that while about 64.7% of the voters identified as Taiwanese in early 2016, only 29.9% supported Taiwanese independence in general. Therefore, the two indicators in effect imply different types of nationalism. In this study, we differentiate these two types. One is a moderate Taiwanese nationalism, an observable variable indicated by a Taiwanese identity. The survey asked voters to choose between three identities of Chinese, both Taiwanese and Chinese, and Taiwanese. While there are many who see themselves as Taiwanese and not Chinese, this does not necessarily mean that they support Taiwan's de jure independence from China. We therefore consider Taiwanese identity to be the more moderate form of Taiwanese nationalism. We suggest that this is more an expression of social and cultural identification with Taiwan than a strong political determination for Taiwan's de jure independence.

The other type of Taiwanese nationalism is a more radical nationalism indicated by the voter's support for de jure independence. It is a latent variable measured by three survey questions asking the voters whether they support Taiwanese independence (1) in general; (2) as long as Taiwan can still maintain peaceful relations with China after declaring independence; and (3) even if China attacks Taiwan as a result.
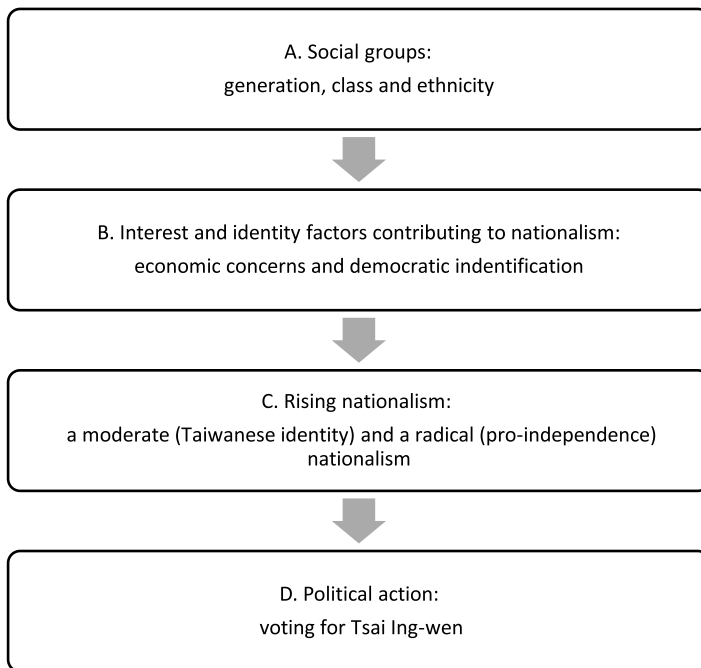

Figure 2. An operationalized model for Taiwan's 2016 presidential election.

Compared to the moderate form, radical nationalism is more political, more ambitious, and less pragmatic. As TEDS2016 shows, it is also much less appealing to Taiwanese voters.

In summary, we propose one economic interest variable and three identity variables as basic explanatory variables to form the causal mechanisms underlying the choices of different social groups in favor of Tsai. Following the proposed causal model (Figure 1), we may start with the hypothesis that economic concerns and democratic identification contributed to a rise in moderate and radical nationalism which subsequently contributed to a vote for Tsai. Figure 2 shows the operationalized model (see Table A.1 for more details of the variables used in the analysis).

Eleven Causal Mechanisms Underlying the Voting Choices of Four Social Groups

To make the model more sophisticated, we added more causal mechanisms to Figure 2: We hypothesized 11 causal mechanisms divided into three sets to account for pro-Tsai votes. The three sets of mechanisms explore the causal paths step by step with a different number of mediator variables. All of the 11 causal mechanisms are integrated into an SEM to test for their effects on the voting choices of a particular social group.

The first set of causal mechanisms includes four first-order mechanisms with a mediator in each mechanism. In the four causal mechanisms, the four basic explanatory variables are the mediators between the tested social group (versus the reference group) and their vote for Tsai, indicating that they vote for Tsai because of this mediator variable. Specifically, the four mechanisms are

1. The mechanism of economic interest. Some studies have found that those who view cross-Strait economic relations more negatively tend to support the DPP (Lin, 2013; Lin & Hu, 2011; Qi, 2013; Wu, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize that people are more likely to vote for Tsai because of their stronger concern for the negative economic impact of improved cross-Strait relations.

2. The mechanism of identification with Taiwanese democracy. Some studies have found that pan-green/DPP supporters showed a stronger identification with democratic values (Chang, 2011). Therefore, we hypothesize that a vote for Tsai is also driven by a stronger sense of identification with Taiwanese democracy.

3. The mechanism of Taiwanese identity (moderate Taiwanese nationalism). Taiwanese nationalism has long been found to underlie social support for the DPP,

which has been the leading force of Taiwanese nationalism (Chen, 2000; Cheng, 2009; Qi, 2013; Wu, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize that people are more likely to vote for Tsai when they identify as Taiwanese.

4. The mechanism of pro-independence attitudes (radical Taiwanese nationalism). Similar to the aforementioned argument, we also hypothesize that people are more likely to vote for Tsai because of a more favorable attitude toward Taiwanese independence. If our differentiation between moderate and radical forms of nationalism is conceptually meaningful and analytically useful, the model results are expected to show that (i) the mechanism of pro-independence attitudes works in fewer social groups than the mechanism of Taiwanese identity due to the former's weaker public appeal and (ii) radical nationalism's independent effect on voting choice is larger than moderate nationalism's due to the stronger political affinity between radical nationalism and voting behavior.

The second set of causal mechanisms includes the following five nationalism oriented second-order mechanisms with two-level mediators in each mechanism:

5. The mechanism of interest-identity nationalism. Some studies have found that Taiwanese nationalism is associated with concerns about the negative impact of cross-Strait economic relations (Wu, 2012). One study went further to clarify the causal mechanism by proposing that economic concerns might lead people to economic nationalism (Qi, 2013). Therefore, we hypothesize that concerns about the negative impact of improved cross-Strait economic relations promotes a Taiwanese identity, which in turn makes people more likely to vote for Tsai. As a Taiwanese identity is indicative of moderate nationalism, we may also describe this causal mechanism as moderate economic nationalism. It is therefore a type of economic nationalism because it positively correlates with the economic concerns of voters. It is also a type of moderate nationalism because it is expressed through national identity, the moderate form of Taiwanese nationalism.

6. The mechanism of interest-pro-independence nationalism. Following the same line as the aforementioned argument, we also hypothesize that people vote for Tsai because their economic concerns increase their support for Taiwanese independence. As pro-independence attitudes are indicative of radical nationalism, we may describe this mechanism as radical economic nationalism.

7. The mechanism of democracy-identity nationalism. As suggested by Taiwan's former President Lee Teng-hui, the spiritual leader of the Taiwanese independence movement, identification with democracy is a core element of Taiwanese nationalism (Yan, 2017). Some studies further suggest that Taiwanese nationalism has evolved from an ethnic nationalism defined by objective ethnic markers to civic

nationalism defined by a subjective common commitment to political institutions, values, and norms (Song, 2009). Therefore, we argue that identification with Taiwan's democratic institutions is a source of civic nationalism. We hypothesize that a stronger identification with Taiwanese democracy is a factor in the development of a Taiwanese identity, which in turn makes one more likely to vote for Tsai. We may describe this mechanism as moderate civic nationalism, which is a type of civic nationalism because of its roots in the civic concerns of voters (i.e., democratic identification) and a type of moderate nationalism because of its expression through national identity, the moderate form of nationalism.

8. The mechanism of democracy-pro-independence nationalism. Similarly, we also hypothesize that a stronger sense of identification with Taiwanese democracy contributes to a stronger determination for Taiwanese independence, which in turn makes one more likely to vote for Tsai. We may describe this mechanism as radical civic nationalism due to its being expressed through support for Taiwanese independence, the more radical form of nationalism.[5]

9. The mechanism of identity-pro-independence nationalism. As some scholars have found that people who identified as Taiwanese were more likely to support Taiwanese independence (Keng, Liu, & Chen, 2009), we hypothesize that a Taiwanese identity accounts for a stronger determination for Taiwanese independence, which then makes one more likely to vote for Tsai.

The third set of causal mechanisms includes the following two nationalism oriented third-order mechanisms with three-level mediators in each mechanism:

10. Combining the two second-order mechanisms of interest-identity and identity-pro-independence produces the third-order mechanism of interest-identity-pro-independence nationalism. Economic concerns promote a Taiwanese identity that contributes to a more favorable attitude toward Taiwanese independence which in turn increases the probability of voting for Tsai.

11. Combining the two second-order mechanisms of democracy-identity and identity-pro-independence results in the third-order mechanism of democracy-identity-pro-independence. A stronger identification with Taiwanese democracy is a contributor to a Taiwanese identity. A Taiwanese identity promotes a stronger

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[5]Some studies such as those reviewed in the introduction section propose similar causal mechanisms to mechanisms 5 through 8 proposed here. However, other scholars such as Achen and Wang (2017) might argue for opposite causal directions in these mechanisms because they propose that more stable and dominant identity factors would shape various attitudes, including the voter's evaluation of the impact of changing cross-Strait relations on his or her economic interest. We also tried the reverse causal direction in each of these mechanisms to test their argument, but the modeling results show that these reversed causalities are statistically non-significant.
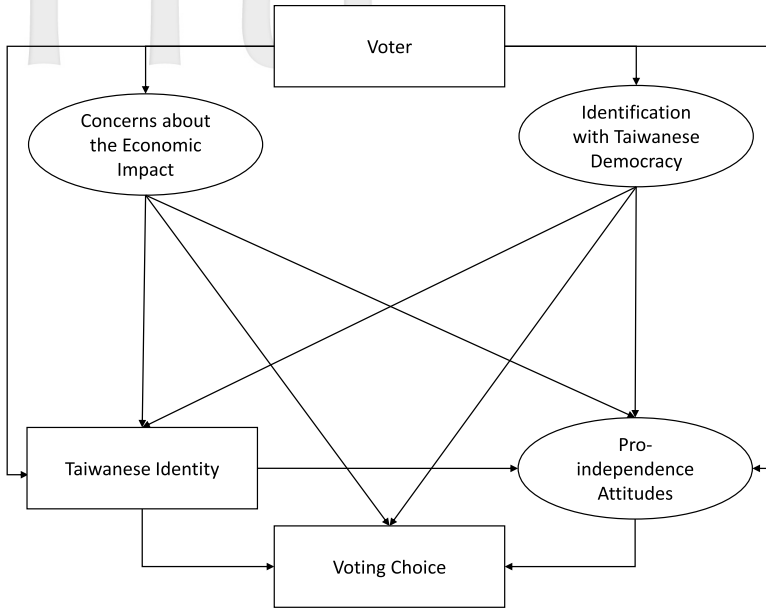
Figure 3. SEM with 11 causal mechanisms.

determination for Taiwanese independence, which increases the likelihood of voting for Tsai.

All of the 11 causal mechanisms may be integrated into a single SEM (Figure 3). We will use this SEM to test whether these causal mechanisms work among the social groups defined by generation, class, and ethnicity.

The generation group of interest in this study is the younger generation that is generally more likely to support the DPP (Lin, 2015; Liu, 1994; Sheng, 2002). In the study of Taiwan's generation politics, a generation is defined from different perspectives depending on the study's purpose. Our study aims to examine which of these causal mechanisms works in the choice of younger and older voters to vote for Tsai. We therefore chose the youngest voters of 20–29 years old as the younger generation and the rest (aged 30 and above) as the reference group in the first SEM of generation. These voters were born after the DPP was established in 1986, grew up after the KMT government lifted martial law in 1987, and have been significantly influenced by Taiwan's democratization, the rise of Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwan's democratic consolidation. Therefore, they are a generation of democracy and nationalism. We also tested the older generation of those aged 60 and above with the rest (aged 20–59) as the reference group in the second SEM of generation. Most of this older generation were over 30 years old when the DPP was established, and their socialization had

largely occurred prior to Taiwan's democratization. While we acknowledge that our dichotomous defintion of younger and older generations is somewhat simplistic, it may still reveal a meaningful generational gap through the two SEMs.

There are many ways to operationalize class (Lin, 2015; Lin & Hu, 2011; Yang, 2007). In this study, we follow a previous study of the support of less privileged groups for the DPP to operationalize the relatively lower class (Qi, 2013) in which four dimensions of age, education, occupation, and region of residence are used to define the less privileged. In the current study, we do not suppose that age is a significant indicator of social stratification in Taiwan and is therefore much less associated with class; as such, it is tested separately in the two generation SEMs. Therefore, we keep only education, occupation, and residence as the criteria for defining the less privileged in Taiwan. More specifically, those who are less educated with a junior high education or below, those who are blue-collar workers or farmers, or those who live in relatively less developed areas of southern Taiwan are defined as the less privileged group in this study and compared to the reference group of the privileged[6] in the class SEM. In terms of ethnicity, the Hoklo have generally been the DPP's most consistent supporters (Qi, 2013). The SEM of ethnicity will show whether these causal mechanisms also work in their voting for Tsai when compared to the rest (i.e., mainly Hakka and Waishengren).

The final dependent variable of voting choice is coded as 1 for respondents who voted for Tsai in the 2016 election or for those who did not get to vote but would vote for Tsai if able. To make the models more robust, each model also controls age, education, residence, ethnicity, gender, satisfaction with President Ma, and interest in the election when appropriate. Table A.1 in Appendix A provides descriptive statistics of all the variables used in this study. Appendix B elaborates more on the SEM methods used.

Findings

Figures 4–7 indicate the results of the SEM for the younger generation, the older generation, the Hoklo, and the less privileged, respectively.[7] We analyze the findings

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[6]The privileged are the voters who remain after excluding the less privileged. More specifically, they are the better educated, residents of northern and middle Taiwan, and those who are neither blue-collar workers nor farmers.

[7]In each SEM, $*p \leq 0.05$, $**p \leq 0.01$, $***p \leq 0.001$, the dotted line indicates the non-significant causal mechanism, and the dash-dotted line at the bottom right corner indicates the effects of the control variables.
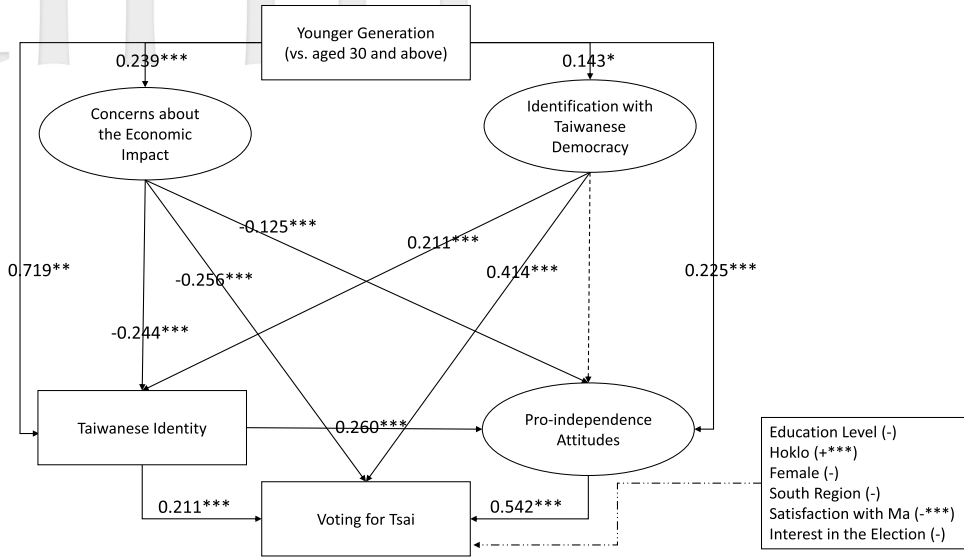
Figure 4. The SEM for the younger generation (vs. the non-younger generation) with 10 working causal mechanisms.
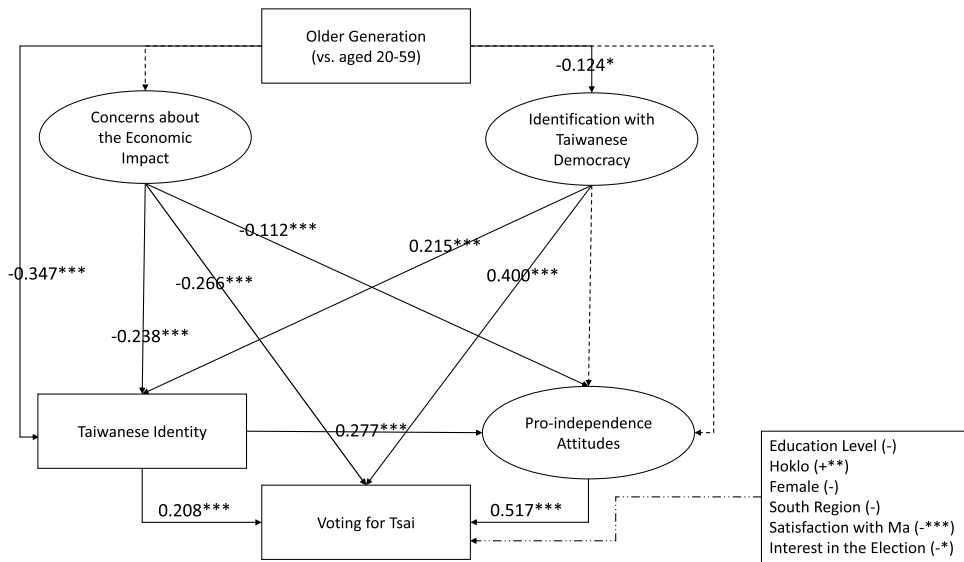

Figure 5. SEM for the older generation (vs. the non-older generation) with four working causal mechanisms.
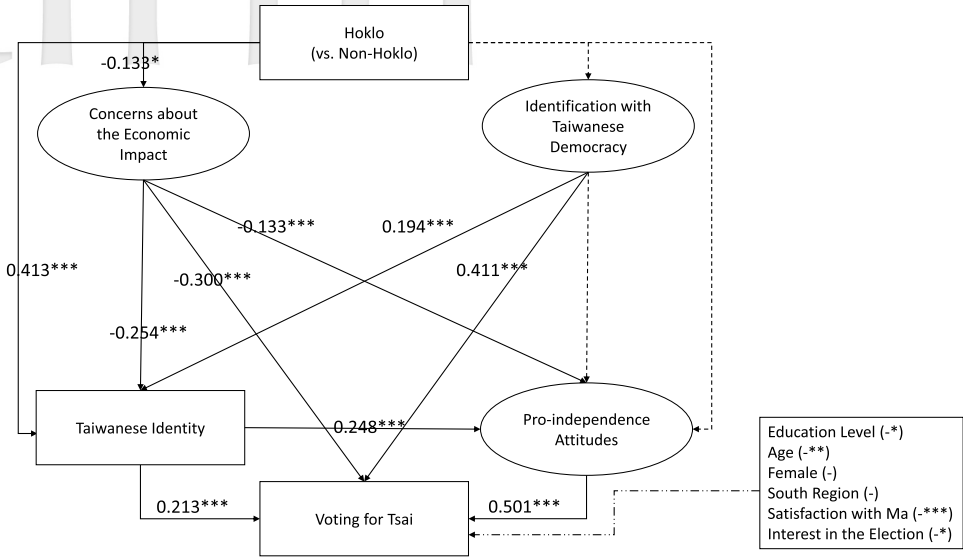
Figure 6. SEM for the Hoklo (vs. non-Hoklo) with six working causal mechanisms.

from three perspectives. From the perspective of causal mechanisms, we examine whether every causal mechanism works in the voting behavior of each examined group. We examine whether the interest or identity factor has the largest effect on voting choice from the perspective of the interest-identity framework. From the

Figure 7. SEM for the less privileged (vs. privileged) with seven working causal mechanisms.

perspective of social cleavages, we explore the most important findings for generation, class, and ethnicity in this election. As Table 1 show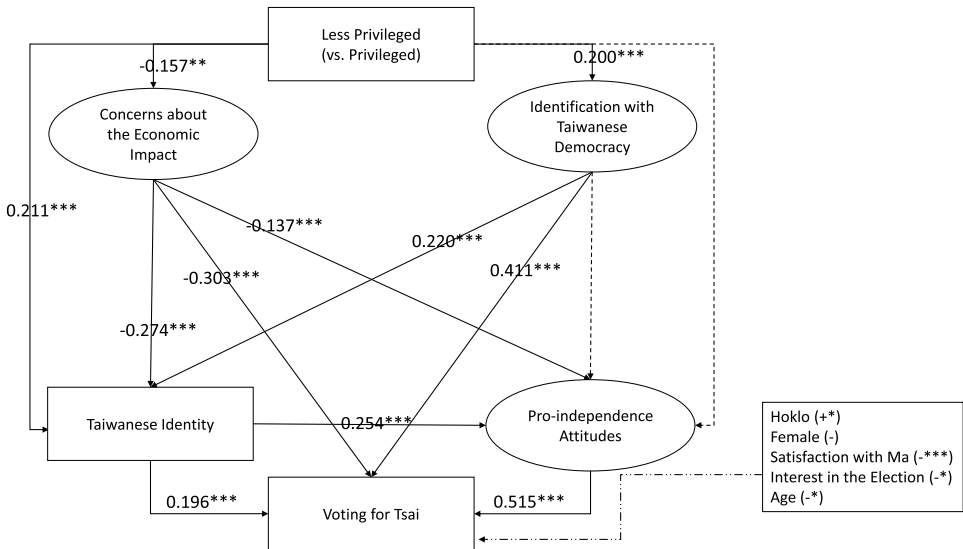s, the causal mechanism's effect on voting choice decreases as the order of the mechanism increases. In other words, the first-order mechanism's effect on voting choice is larger than the second-order mechanism's, which in turn is larger than the third-order mechanism's. Therefore, the four first-order mechanisms are the most important for our analysis.

The First-Order Mechanism

The mechanism of Taiwanese identity (moderate Taiwanese nationalism) works positively among the younger generation, the less privileged, and the Hoklo and negatively among the older generation in their respective voting for Tsai. This is to say that compared to their respective reference groups, the younger generation, the less privileged, and the Hoklo are more likely to have a stronger Taiwanese identity, making them more likely to vote for Tsai. The older generation is less likely to have a Taiwanese identity, making them comparatively less likely to vote for Tsai. Therefore, Taiwanese identity is a universal causal mechanism underlying the voting choices of every group, generating a negative effect on the older generation and positive ones on all other examined groups.

The mechanism of pro-independence attitudes (radical Taiwanese nationalism) works positively in the younger generation's voting for Tsai. In other words, the younger generation has more positive attitudes toward Taiwanese independence, which makes them more likely to vote for Tsai. This mechanism does not work in the voting choices of the older generation, the less privileged, and the Hoklo because these groups do not have significantly more favorable attitudes toward Taiwanese independence than their respective reference groups. This confirms our argument that radical nationalism appeals to fewer social groups than moderate nationalism. At the same time, Figures 4–7 indicate that radical nationalism's independent effect on voting choice is consistently larger than that of moderate nationalism in the same model, which also confirms our argument that the effects of radical nationalism are greater due to its political affinity with voting behavior. Therefore, among different generations, classes, and ethnic groups, radical nationalism impacts the voting choices of fewer social groups than moderate nationalism does, probably due to the belief that its aims are unachievable and would come at great cost. When radical nationalism does generate an effect, however, its independent effect on voting choice is greater than that of moderate nationalism's. These findings indicate that our differentiation between moderate and radical forms of nationalism is both conceptually meaningful and analytically useful.

Table 1.
The Effect of Each Mechanism on the Voting Choices of Each Social Group

Social cleavage	Social group	Four first-order mechanisms				Five second-order mechanisms					Two third-order mechanisms		# of working mechanisms
		Economic interest	Democratic identification	Taiwanese identity	Support for Taiwanese independence	Economy-identity	Economy-pro-independence	Democracy-identity	Democracy-pro-independence	Identity-pro-independence	Economy-identity-pro-independence	Democracy-identity-pro-independence	
Generation	Younger generation (*N* = 1690)	−0.061	0.059	0.152	0.122	−0.012	−0.016	0.006	ns	0.101	−0.008	0.004	**10**
	Older generation (*N* = 1690)	ns	−0.050	−0.072	ns	ns	ns	−0.006	ns	−0.053	ns	−0.004	**4**
Ethnicity	Hoklo (*N* = 1690)	0.040	ns	0.089	ns	0.007	0.009	ns	ns	0.052	0.004	ns	**6**
Class	Less privileged (*N* = 1690)	0.060	0.082	0.041	ns	0.011	0.014	0.009	ns	0.028	ns	ns	**7**

Notes: ns means non-significant; *N* is the sample size.
Source: Calculation based on the SEMs of Figures 4–7.

The mechanism of economic interest works negatively in the younger generation's support for Tsai, positively among less privileged and Hoklo voters, and insignificantly in the older generation. In other words, the younger generation holds a more positive view of the impact of improved cross-Strait economic relations, making them less likely to vote for Tsai, as she frequently challenged these views before the election. In contrast, the less privileged and the Hoklo tend to hold more negative views toward this issue, having a higher likelihood of voting for Tsai. The older generation does not have a view on this issue that is significantly different from the others.

The mechanism of democratic identification works positively among younger and less privileged voters, negatively among older voters, and insignificantly among Hoklo voters. In other words, the young and the less privileged have strong identification with Taiwanese democracy, making them more likely to vote for Tsai. In contrast, the older generation has a weaker identification with Taiwanese democracy and is therefore less likely to vote for Tsai. These findings generally confirm the findings of existing studies that younger voters are more likely to show strong support for liberal and democratic values than older ones (Chang, 2011; Huang, 2011; Tsui & Wu, 2011). Identification with Taiwanese democracy among the Hoklo is not significantly different from that among other ethnic groups.

Second-Order Mechanisms

First, Table 1 shows that a stronger identification with Taiwanese democracy does not lead to stronger support for Taiwanese independence. In other words, for all the examined groups, the second-order mechanism of democracy-pro-independence nationalism does not exist. These findings are significant because democracy has been a major basis for Taiwanese nationalism. Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwan's democratization have developed hand in hand since the 1980s and have been practically two sides of the same coin (Qi, 2016). However, the findings here indicate that a stronger identification with Taiwanese democracy does not significantly increase a voter's support for radical nationalism.

On the other hand, stronger identification with Taiwanese democracy does make a voter more likely to identify as Taiwanese, and democracy-identified nationalism works positively among younger and less privileged voters, negatively among older ones, and insignificantly among the Hoklo. Therefore, while identification with Taiwanese democracy does not promote radical Taiwanese nationalism, it does lead to moderate nationalism. In other words, Taiwan is largely home to moderate and not radical civic nationalism. This generally confirms the popular argument that civic nationalism is not radical (Jaskułowski, 2010).

Figures 4–7 also indicate that while democratic identification has no direct positive effect on support for Taiwanese independence, it indirectly affects such support through the mediator variable of Taiwanese identity. This contradicts the popular belief that identification with democracy is able to directly motivate support for independence.

In contrast, concerns about the negative impact of improved cross-Strait economic relations promote both a pro-independence attitude and a Taiwanese identity. Therefore, as Table 1 indicates, the second-order mechanisms of economic nationalism that include both economy-identity nationalism and economy-pro-independence nationalism work negatively among younger voters, positively among less privileged and Hoklo ones, and insignificantly among older ones. In other words, these two mechanisms make pro-Tsai votes less likely to come from the younger generation and more likely from the less privileged and the Hoklo while having no significant effect on older voters.

These findings imply that the Chinese government's economic strategy for winning the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people has borne some fruit but still faces a dilemma: It may have directly or indirectly reduced support for Tsai among younger Taiwanese through diminishing of their economic nationalism while also increasing support for Tsai among the less privileged and the Hoklo directly or indirectly by increasing their economic nationalism. As the younger generation, the less privileged and the Hoklo comprise most of the DPP's social base (i.e., the pan-green camp), improved cross-Strait economic relations had become the dividing issue not only between pan-green and pan-blue camps, but also within the pan-green camp during the 2016 presidential election.

The mechanism of identity-pro-independence nationalism works among all groups, making votes for Tsai more likely to come from the young, the less privileged, and the Hoklo and less likely to come from the older generation. When it is an outcome of Taiwanese identity, support for Taiwanese independence contributes to the voting choices of every group as the second-level mediator.

Third-Order Mechanisms

Compared to the first-order and second-order mechanisms, the third-order mechanism affects the voting choices the least. It shall therefore be discussed in brief.

The mechanism of economy-identity-pro-independence nationalism makes the Hoklo more likely and the younger generation less likely to vote for Tsai. It does not influence the voting choices of the older generation or the less privileged.

The mechanism of democracy-identity-pro-independence nationalism makes the younger generation more likely and the older generation less likely to vote for Tsai. It does not influence the voting choices of the Hoklo or the less privileged.

Interest vs. Identity

To compare the total effects of all four factors on the voting choices of each group, we standardized their total effects as shown in Table 2. The results show that for each group, identity was the greatest factor affecting their voting choices: For younger and older generations and the Hoklo, Taiwanese identity had the greatest effect. For the younger generation, pro-independence attitudes had the second largest effect. Therefore, both moderate and radical forms of nationalism contributed more to support for Tsai among the younger generation within the model's specifications. For the Hoklo, moderate nationalism played the most important role in their stronger support for Tsai. For the less privileged, identification with Taiwanese democracy had the greatest effect. Their stronger support for Tsai was mainly due to a stronger identification with Taiwanese democracy within the model's specifications.

Identity factors generally contributed more to support for Tsai in 2016 than interest factors. This is probably because Ma's argument that better cross-Strait relations would save Taiwan's economy had become unconvincing by the end of his second term while the significance of identity issues such as nationalism and democracy had increased rapidly among voters since the Sunflower Movement in 2014. As a result, the 2016 presidential election was a typical case of identity politics. These findings generally support *The Taiwan Voter*'s strong argument for the dominant role of identities in Taiwan's electoral politics (Achen & Wang, 2017). While the book does not examine the 2016 presidential election and emphasizes the respective effects of party identification, national identity, and ethnic identity on the behavior of every voter, this study shows that the largest impactful identity factor is different among different social groups. This study has also found that a new identity factor of identification with Taiwanese democracy had the largest effect on the voting choices of less privileged groups in 2016. Nevertheless, arguments that identity plays a greater role in elections need to recognize that more powerful economic factors might not be included in the model's specifications due to a particular research purpose, and this may lead to an exaggeration of its effects. For example, if we include voters' evaluations of the economic performance of the Ma administration in the model of this study, it is uncertain whether the identity factor would still appear to have such a significant effect on voters. Because our model is nationalism-oriented, economic interest factors unrelated to nationalism are not included.

Table 2.
Standardized Total Effects of Each Explanatory Factor on the Voting Choices of Each Social Group

Social cleavage	Social group	Economic interest	Democratic identification	Taiwanese identity	Pro-independence attitudes	Total effect ranking
Generation	Younger generation	−0.073	0.052	0.188	0.091	Identity > Pro-independence > −Interest > Democracy
	Older generation	ns	−0.055	−0.116	ns	−Identity > −Democracy
Ethnicity	Hoklo	0.055	ns	0.128	ns	Identity > Interest
Class	Less privileged	0.085	0.091	0.042	ns	Democracy > Interest > Identity

Notes: ns means non-significant.
Source: Calculation based on the SEMs of Figures 4–7.

Important Findings on Social Cleavages

Generation

The most important findings from this study involve younger and older generations. The young view the impact of improved cross-Strait economic relations more positively while the less privileged and the Hoklo do not. Nevertheless, the younger generation is still generally more likely to support Tsai and formed the majority of the DPP's social base alongside the less privileged and the Hoklo in 2016. The young hold more favorable attitudes toward Taiwanese independence and therefore more radical Taiwanese nationalism, which is also the second largest contributor to their support for Tsai. If their radical nationalism does not decline with age, Taiwanese nationalism will also become more radical, which will benefit the DPP in the future. Most mechanisms work differently among the older generation than they do in other social groups: Mechanisms with economic interests or pro-independence attitudes do not work among the older generation, while Taiwanese identities and democratic identification work negatively for their voting for Tsai. As in Europe and the United States (Norris & Inglehart, 2019), a significant generational gap in politics exists among Taiwanese voters.

Ethnicity

One interesting finding is that greater identification with Taiwanese democracy encourages pro-Tsai votes from all groups but the Hoklo. This is because democratic identification is not significantly different between the Hoklo and other ethnic groups. In other words, generation and class significantly influence identification with Taiwanese democracy while ethnicity does not. That is to say, democratic identification in Taiwan is largely a generational and class phenomenon and not an ethnic one.

Support for Taiwanese independence among the Hoklo is also not significantly higher than that of other groups. This is unexpected since they have been seen to be long-term supporters of Taiwanese nationalism (Keng *et al.*, 2009; Lin, 2015). The findings here indicate that they are more likely than other ethnic groups to support moderate but not radical nationalism. In other words, generation significantly influences pro-independence attitudes while ethnicity and class do not. Radical Taiwanese nationalism is largely a generational phenomenon and not an ethnic or class one in Taiwan.

Class

The most interesting finding in terms of class is that as Table 2 shows, identification with Taiwanese democracy contributes the most to pro-Tsai votes among less

privileged, while for all other social groups, moderate Taiwanese nationalism (i.e., Taiwanese identity) contributes the most. This is interesting because while economic interests are often thought to be the greatest concerns of less privileged groups, they are not the greatest influence on their voting choices. This probably indicates that the less privileged are more likely to believe the DPP's argument that stronger democracy in Taiwan is the best means of protecting their interests.

These findings have important implications for the Chinese government. Since the Sunflower Movement in 2014, the Chinese government has realized that the less privileged in Taiwan did not benefit greatly from improved cross-Strait relations, which they believed to be the major reason for their support for the DPP. It has therefore tried to improve its Taiwan policy by emphasizing the interests of the less privileged, such as Taiwan's "three middles and one young".[8] However, as economic concerns were not the largest influence on their voting choices, more economic benefits may not be able to counter the positive effect that their identification with Taiwanese democracy has had on their support for the DPP. In fact, this has happened among younger voters who view the economic impact of improved cross-Strait relations more positively but are still more likely in the end to vote for Tsai. This is because economic concerns are less significant than moderate and radical nationalism when it comes to voting choices. Similarly, because identity was the most influential factor on the voting choices of all social groups in the form of either identification with Taiwanese democracy or moderate Taiwanese nationalism, the Chinese government's economic strategy of a "sweeter carrot" may not be able to change the support of these groups for the DPP (Chen & Keng, 2009). Another noteworthy finding about class is that all less privileged groups including residents of southern Taiwan, blue-collar workers, farmers, and the less educated are not supportive of radical nationalism.

Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

Based on the literature about the roles of growing nationalism in recent world politics, we have proposed a generic and adaptable causal model to explain voting and other political actions of different social groups by mechanisms that pertain to nationalism. We then operationalize this model with interest and identity variables to form 11 causal mechanisms integrated through an SEM before examining whether and

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[8]This represents the grassroots in Taiwan, including residents in middle and southern Taiwan, middle and lower classes, small and medium-sized enterprises, and younger generations. See (Romberg, 2017).

how much these mechanisms work in the voting choices of different generations, classes, and ethnic groups in Taiwan's 2016 presidential election.

This study's findings about the influence of interest and identity factors on voting choices confirm several popular arguments but are not new to the literature. However, this study does contribute to the literature in several ways. First, it reveals the causal links between interest and identity factors which underlie the voting behavior of different social groups. In other words, we find that these factors influence voting choice both independently and together in causally connected ways, a dynamic which has rarely been systematically examined in the existing literature on Taiwanese voting behavior. Also absent from the literature is the revelation that different social groups share some common causal mechanisms while following several different mechanisms in their voting. Finally, the generic model proposed by this study may be adapted and then applied to other cases that involve nationalism.

Of the 11 causal mechanisms, 10 work among the younger generation, seven among the less privileged, six among the Hoklo, and finally, four among the older generation. For each group, identity contributes the most to their voting choices. Specifically, moderate Taiwanese nationalism (i.e., Taiwanese identity) is the largest contributor to pro-Tsai votes among the young and the Hoklo. For the less privileged, identification with Taiwan's democracy is the largest contributor. Therefore, addressing the economic concerns of voters through improved cross-Strait economic relations may not prevent them from supporting the DPP if their identity concerns remain strong (Chen & Keng, 2009). For the younger generation, economic concerns are only the third most influential factor on their voting choices, with radical Taiwanese nationalism being the second. This being the case, attempting to contain the support of younger Taiwanese for the DPP through economic "carrots" alone may be equally ineffective. Our findings basically confirm the popular argument that since Taiwanese electoral politics is largely defined by identity politics, the "interest card" played by Beijing has been less effective in swaying voters in elections. Furthermore, the findings clarify that national identity and democracy are the two major identity issues in the election. While younger and Hoklo voters are more concerned about national identity, the less privileged appear to be more concerned with democracy.

The economic concerns of cross-Strait relations also contribute to the voting choices of all social groups but the older generation. This implies that while improved cross-Strait relations had indeed become a dividing issue in Taiwan's 2016 presidential election, it nevertheless had a very limited impact on voting. Economic concerns also contribute to both moderate and radical forms of nationalism, which subsequently influence the voting choices of several groups. Beijing must understand that its

economic strategy towards Taiwan has divided Taiwanese society along social clea-vages of generation, class, and ethnicity, resulting directly in greater support for Tsai among the less privileged and the Hoklo and indirectly by increasing their economic nationalism. These two groups form the majority of Taiwan's electorate.[9] It seems that Beijing's "divide and conquer" strategy had succeeded in "dividing" Taiwanese voters but was unable to "conquer" them in the 2016 presidential election. The social divi-sions caused by improved cross-Strait relations had significantly increased support for the DPP among several large groups, either directly or indirectly through the strengthening of moderate and radical forms of nationalism.

Another interesting finding from this study is that identification with Taiwanese democracy as a source of civic nationalism promotes moderate nationalism in the form of a stronger Taiwanese identity but does not contribute to support for Taiwanese independence, a type of radical nationalism. This contradicts the popular view that democratic identification has motivated Taiwanese toward independence but is con-sistent with the mainstream argument that civic nationalism is usually not radical. Although there is no direct causal link between democratic identification and stronger support for Taiwanese independence, the findings also indicate that the former still has an indirect positive effect on the latter through the mediator variable of Taiwanese identity.

In addition to the four social groups defined by generation, class, and ethnicity, the SEM with 11 causal mechanisms may be applied to social groups defined by other social cleavages in Taiwan such as gender and religion. It may also be tested by data collected at different times, such as Taiwan's 2012 and 2020 presidential elections, or from different places like Hong Kong, where the economy, nativism, and democratic identification have played increasingly important roles in its elections and protests against Beijing. Future applications of this model to such cases may find that some of the 11 mechanisms work only in Taiwan's 2016 election.

Moreover, the generic model may be operationalized differently from this study to fit the unique situation of a different society. For example, future studies may use different mediator variables and form fewer causal mechanisms under a different theoretical framework to explore how these mechanisms work in the political actions of different social groups. This study examines 11 causal mechanisms in order to demonstrate the sophistication of this model, a choice which might be too many for a single paper: While we can present which causal mechanism works among which

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[9]The TEDS2016 shows that the less privileged and the Hoklo were 60% and 73.3% of Taiwan's electorate, respectively.

social group, we are unable to discuss why it works or does not work in greater detail. Future studies may choose to examine fewer mechanisms with a deeper analysis of their dynamics.

Acknowledgments

Appendix A

Table A.1.
Descriptive Statistics Table

Latent variable	Observable variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max	Meaning of value
Economic concerns/ interest	Economic impact on Taiwan	1,690	1.944	0.729	1	3	Higher value means a more positive view
	Economic impact on self	1,690	1.886	0.462	1	3	Higher value means a more positive view
	Taiwanese identity	1,690	2.604	0.571	1	3	Higher value means closer to Taiwanese identity
Pro-independence attitudes	Pro-independence in general	1,690	3.717	1.190	1	6	Higher value means more pro-independence
	Pro-independence through peace	1,690	2.757	0.795	1	4	Higher value means more pro-independence
	Pro-independence through war	1,690	2.364	0.758	1	4	Higher value means more pro-independence
Identification with Taiwanese democracy	Taiwanese democracy degree	1,690	2.622	0.643	1	4	Higher value means a higher degree of democracy

Table A.1. (*Continued*)

Latent variable	Observable variable	*N*	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max	Meaning of value
	Satisfaction with Taiwanese democracy	1,690	2.605	0.672	1	4	Higher value means more satisfaction
	Trust in politicians	1,690	2.536	0.962	1	5	Higher value means higher trust
Control variable							
	Age cohort	1,690	3.300	1.436	1	5	Higher value means older cohort
	Education level	1,690	3.293	1.494	1	5	Higher value means higher education level
	Gender	1,690	0.486	0.500	0	1	1 means female
	Satisfaction with Ma Ying-jeou	1,690	1.995	0.810	1	4	Higher value means more satisfaction
	Interest in the election	1,690	2.192	0.815	1	4	Higher value means less interest
	Southern Taiwan resident	1,690	0.290	0.454	0	1	1 means southern Taiwan resident
Social cleavage (tested social group)							
Ethnicity	Hoklo	1,690	0.733	0.443	0	1	1 means Hoklo
Generation	Younger generation	1,690	0.156	0.363	0	1	1 means 20–29 years old
	Older generation	1,690	0.290	0.454	0	1	1 means 60-and-above years old
Class	Less privileged	1,690	0.600	0.490	0	1	1 means blue-collar worker, farmer, southern Taiwan resident, or junior high-or-below education
Dependent variable							
	Vote for Tsai	1,690	0.609	0.488	0	1	1 means voted or would vote for Tsai

Source: TEDS2016.

Table A.2.
Fitting Coefficients of SEMs

Models	RMSEA	CFI	GFI
Younger generation	0.038	0.966	0.97
Older generation	0.035	0.971	0.972
Hoklo	0.035	0.971	0.971
Less privileged	0.036	0.971	0.974
Standard	<0.06	>0.9	>0.9

Source: SEMs of Figures 4–7.

Appendix B. Notes on Method

We use R software with the package "lavaan" (latent variable analysis) of SEM to test the hypothesized causal mechanisms. SEM enables us to scrutinize every causal mechanism as well as to compare their effects within each model. As the model includes categorical variables (including binary and ordinal variables), the lavaan package enables us to use WLSMV (weighted least squares mean and variance adjusted) estimator. The confirmatory factor analysis is adopted in latent variable modeling in SEM. To deal with the missing value problem, we did multivariate imputation with the package "mice" (multivariate imputation via chained equations) of R. Multivariate imputation employs Fully Conditional Specification (FCS) implemented by the MICE algorithm as suggested by van Buuren and Groothuis-Oudshoorn (2011). Each variable, including continuous, binary, and other categorical variables, has its own imputation model. After the imputation, the structure of the new dataset is similar to that of the original one.

All model fitting coefficients reported by R, including RMSEA (The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), and GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), meet the required standards as indicated by Table A.2, which suggests that the models are statistically acceptable.

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