

Generational Discrepancies in Public Attitude on Taiwan's Unification Issue*

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In Taiwan, the public's attitude on the unification/independence issue is very diversified, ranging between supporting immediate unification and supporting immediate independence. The majority of the Taiwan public stands between these two extremes. On an aggregate level, the distribution of these positions has been quite stable in the past three years. However, there have been variations on the individual level. The purpose of this paper is to examine the individual differences among the Taiwan public regarding this issue.

The concept of "political generation" will be applied to distinguish attitudinal discrepancies among different groups. Survey data will be used to analyze the different distributions of unification/independence attitudes among various generations of the three major ethnic groups in Taiwan: the Fulao, Hakka, and mainlanders. Discrepancies have been found among these generation groups; especially noticeable is the fact that the youngest generations of Fulao and Hakka tend to be more supportive of a unified Taiwan and China than their elders. This could be a life-cycle phenomenon and subject to change in the future. These discrepancies also have been found to have an impact on presidential preferences.

Keywords: unification attitude; political generation; socialization; cross-Straits relations; presidential election

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Cross-Straits relations are a key issue in Taiwan's economic and political development, and its priority has been moved up on both

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Taiwan and mainland China's political agendas in recent years. In Taiwan, the establishment of the National Unification Council (NUC) in 1990 and the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) in 1991 signified a new era of mainland affairs policy. At the same time, the democratization of Taiwan politics after decades of authoritarian government has proceeded. Public opinion, along with many other democratic institutions such as competitive elections and legalized opposition political parties, are new factors in policymaking. The MAC, in fact, has begun to regularly sponsor public opinion polls on subjects related to cross-Straits relations. One of the most-investigated topics is the public's opinion on relations between mainland China and Taiwan, especially the unification/independence issue. An understanding of public opinion on this issue is important because it may be the key to solving cross-Straits relations problems. Finding those solutions, however, is not easy. As a society undergoing democratization, opinions on public affairs in Taiwan are usually diversified and subject to change; opinions on unification are no exception.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the cross-generation differences of attitude on the unification issue among Taiwan voters. I will first examine the distribution of attitudes on the unification issue in the past two years. Next, I will use recent survey data to show that there are distribution variations among different generation groups; these discrepancies could have a significant impact on voter behavior. Therefore, the last section of this paper will test if unification issue attitudes played different roles for different political generations when casting votes in the recent presidential election.

Data analyzed in this paper are all taken from surveys conducted by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University. All survey respondents were selected by probabilistic sampling.¹ The

¹Telephone numbers of the telephone survey sample were taken systematically from and proportionally distributed among twenty-four phone directories of Taiwan households. The last two digits were then replaced by random numbers to make the sample list. Dialing was randomly made by computer from the sample list. Up to three tries were made before an eligible respondent was interviewed. Members in each household were picked by random without substitutes. Face-to-face interview samples were drawn in the following way: first, all *xiang* (townships), *xian* (counties), and *qu* (districts) under the jurisdiction of Taiwan Province were divided into tiers according to their demographic characteristics and level of economic development. After the numbers of samples were allotted according to the population proportion of these tiers, samples of townships, counties, and districts were drawn. Next, after sequencing the *cun* (villages) and *li* (neighborhoods) of these townships, counties, and

data used in the major analyses were collected during the Taiwan presidential campaign in February and March, 1996.

The Taiwan Public's Attitudes on the Unification/Independence Issue

The debate on the unification/independence issue has lasted for years in Taiwan, and because of its longevity, one would expect that the distribution of public attitudes on that issue has remained stable. In the past two years, several polls on the unification issue were conducted by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University. The specific question asked to ascertain each respondent's attitude was:

There are several alternatives regarding the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland: immediate unification; immediate independence; maintaining the status quo and pursuing unification; maintaining the status quo and pursuing independence; maintaining the status quo and finding a solution later; and permanently maintaining the status quo. Which is the closest to your own opinion?

These surveys have yielded rich information about the Taiwan public's opinion on this issue. Some of the results are shown in table 1.

The numbers in table 1 indicate a relatively stable distribution of attitudes among the Taiwan public. The largest group has always been those who have felt uncertain about Taiwan's future and wish to retain the status quo unless the future is more certain. If we add the two categories under this type (maintaining the status quo indefinitely or with a "wait and see" attitude), the total is close to 50 percent of the respondents. There has been a slight decrease in this group's numbers since July 1995, but it remains the largest group among the public. Distinguishing the attitudes of the two categories contained within this group is not an easy task. Those who wish to preserve the status quo may be seen as potential independence supporters. However, from analysis of this category's demographic

districts by the size of their population, samples of villages and neighborhoods were drawn equidistantly. Finally, from the name lists of voters of each of these villages and neighborhoods, the equidistant sampling method was again applied to select individuals for interviews. In the process, the probability of individuals in the population being selected remained the same.

Table 1
Public Attitudes on the Taiwan Unification/Independence Issue, 1994-96

Time	Mode of interview	Immediate unification	Maintain status quo, seek unification	Maintain status quo, wait and see	Maintain status quo permanently	Maintain status quo, seek independence	Immediate independence	No attitude	Sample size
1994									
Jan.	Face to face	4.2	23.2	32.1	12.5	8.1	4.3	15.7	1,600
Apr.	Telephone	2.5	18.3	43.1	12.8	8.3	4.0	11.0	820
July	Telephone	3.5	17.2	42.2	9.9	8.4	3.2	15.6	1,193
Dec.	Telephone	1.0	20.5	42.1	10.9	13.6	2.7	10.1	1,347
1995									
July	Face to face	2.8	22.7	35.4	11.1	9.9	5.9	12.1	1,633
Nov.	Telephone	1.9	23.8	32.5	12.4	10.4	3.5	15.5	1,151
1996									
Apr.	Telephone	2.9	23.9	31.0	12.8	11.8	6.5	11.1	1,075

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

background, we cannot tell the difference between them and those who just want to "wait and see." Their common attitude is that they are uncertain about Taiwan's future.

Second, a unified China remains the core value of a group totalling about 25 percent of the Taiwan public. The overwhelming majority in this group does not demand immediate unification (about 97-98 percent). However, all members agree with the goal of unifying Taiwan and mainland China sometimes in the future. There was a proportional decrease in these two categories after the Qiandao Lake incident in March 1994 (compare the first and second rows in table 1), but a year later they were close to previous levels.

Third, the proportion of independence-oriented respondents has remained stable in the past two years. If we add those who support immediate independence or future independence, the sums vary only slightly. There has been a slight increase in "future independence" supporters since July 1995, but the difference has been small.

Overall, we have observed a stable distribution of unification/independence attitudes in Taiwan. The situation will probably remain this way for some time, barring any dramatic developments in cross-strait relations. However, stability at the aggregate level does not necessarily imply stability at the individual level. It is the variations at the individual level that we are interested in examining in this paper.

A Classification of Political Generation Groups in Taiwan

The term "political generation" is difficult to define; when using it, we refer to people who were born in more or less the same period. Since they have lived in the same social and economic environments, people of the same political generation tend to share similar political attitudes.² That is, their similar political inclinations result from

²Related literature is very rich, including Paul J. F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard R. Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 148-49; Warren E. Miller, "One-Party Politics and the Voter," *American Political Science Review* 50 (1956): 707-25; Robert Huckfeldt, *Politics in Context: Assimilation and Conflict in Urban Neighborhoods* (New York: Agathon Press, 1986); Thad A. Brown, "On Contextual Change and Partisan Attributes," *British Journal of Political Science* 11 (1984): 424-47.; M. Stephen Weatherford, "Interpersonal Networks and Political Behavior," *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (1982): 117-43; Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague, "Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information," *American*

similar experiences which they have accumulated during the human life cycle (for instance, childhood, education, employment, marriage, child-rearing, retirement, and aging) and their shared experiences of special historical events (for instance, the eight-year war against Japan, the February 28, 1947 incident, etc.). Conceptually, it is easy for us to understand that groups of people may be divided into different political generations, but in practice, it is difficult to find clear-cut demarcation points in time because of the complex nature of the political attitude-formation process. To observe the Taiwan people's attitudes, the author has divided them into several political generations according to their educational background, ethnic grouping, and important local social, economic, and political conditions. It has been discovered that this concept is valuable in analyzing partisan attitudes among Taiwan's voters.³ In this paper, the unification/independence issue positions of Taiwan voters are also observed from this angle.

Finding cutting points on the time line is a major step in identifying generation groups. To do so, we need to examine major political, economic, and social events and their impacts. In addition, the respondents' ethnic origins and education must be taken into consideration to construct a meaningful classification.

History. There have been major social and historical developments that have had a profound impact on individual attitudes. In Taiwan's contemporary history, many political events have often been described as critical points which influenced the island's political development and the public's political attitudes. These events include: the end of World War II and the resulting return of Taiwan to China in 1945; the February 28, 1947 incident; the defeat of the Nationalist government by the Communists in 1949; the stripping of Taiwan's seat in the United Nations in 1971 and the diplomatic setbacks that

Political Science Review 81 (1987): 1197-1216; Richard G. Braungart and Margaret M. Braungart, "Generational Politics," *Micropolitics* 3 (1984): 349-415; Michael X. Delli Carpini, "Age and History: Generations and Sociopolitical Change," in *Political Learning in Adulthood*, ed. Roberta S. Sigel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 11-55; and John Sprague, "Is There a Micro Theory Consistent with Contextual Analysis?" in *Strategies of Political Inquiry*, ed. Elinor Ostrom (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982).

³See I-chou Liu, "Taiwan's Political Generations," *The Annals* (Taipei: China Association of Political Science) 21 (1993): 99-120; and "Generational Divergence in Party Image Among Taiwan Electorate," *Issues & Studies* 31, no. 2 (February 1995): 87-114.

followed in the 1970s; the Chungli incident in 1977; the Kaohsiung incident in 1979; the establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986; the lifting of martial law in 1987; the establishment of the New Party (NP) in 1993, etc. These events have led to fundamental political changes that have ushered Taiwan society toward new stages of development. Picking the most important events is rather arbitrary because one may make different decisions due to various theoretical needs. For this paper, I believe that two events—the retreat of the Nationalist government to Taiwan in 1949 and the establishment of the DPP—fulfill the requirements mentioned earlier, i.e., critical historical events that changed society's basic political features.

The retreat of the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party of China) to Taiwan changed the society's political structure and socioeconomic conditions. The appearance of a central government in Taipei, the military threat posed by Communist China, and the sudden increase of population due to mainland refugees all were vital changes to Taiwan society. Its impact on individuals has certainly persisted to the present day. Therefore, 1949 is a critical point when we consider political generations.

The establishment of the DPP in 1986, though not legal until the lifting of martial law in July 1987, brought Taiwan a genuine opposition party. Its full participation in elections of all levels has provided voters with a new political stimulus, and a second choice besides the KMT. Hence, the year 1986 is taken as another cutoff point.

Economy. Economically, Taiwan has been one of the most successful models for other developing countries, and its rapid development has changed its residents' lifestyles. As a consequence, people from the originally "poor" Taiwan and those from a "rich" Taiwan are likely to think and act differently in politics. However, just when Taiwan became "rich" is difficult to identify, as economic development is a continuous process. It is difficult to find a point where we may compare the difference of economic performance "before" and "after."

A convenient method is examining Taiwan from an outsider's view. When the United States decided to cease economic aid to Taiwan in 1965, we may say that Taiwan became economically independent at that time. Taiwan in fact enjoyed double-digit annual growth rate before and after 1965. However, since an outsider had decided that Taiwan had "graduated" from the list of underdeveloped

countries, its society must have been judged qualitatively different. This difference was bound to exert influence on individual behavior.

Ethnicity. The role one's ethnic affiliation plays in guiding one's political attitudes and actions in Taiwan has been well-documented. Studies have indicated that significant differences exist between Taiwanese and mainlanders. It is believed that family socialization has had a significant impact.⁴ This influence can exert itself on future generations; it is therefore appropriate to classify Taiwanese (Fulao), mainlanders, and Hakka⁵ into different generation groups even if they were born and lived in the same period. Hence, the term "second generation mainlander" indicates that there is merit in looking at generation differences from the ethnicity perspective.

Taking all the above into consideration, we divided respondents into four "generations" (see figure 1). The first generation's members are currently older than sixty; the second generation's members are between forty-four and fifty-nine years old; the third generation features respondents between thirty and forty-three; and the youngest generation is composed of those who are younger than thirty. Within each of the four generations, we have three different ethnic groups: the Fulao, Hakka, and mainlanders. In total, twelve generation groups were identified.

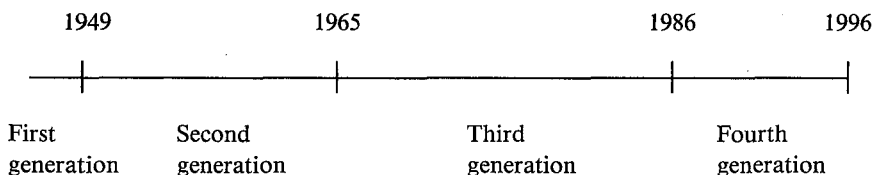
The Various Shapes of Distribution

The term "change" can mean a difference between two points in time; it can also mean the difference between two groups who were born in different eras. To assess change of the first kind, we need panel data where the same group of respondents are repeatedly interviewed at different times. By this process, we can tell exactly who and how much the respondents have shifted their positions on certain issues. The data used in this paper are cross-sectional data appropriate for analyzing such changes among different age groups.

⁴M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); Paul A. Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Family Traditions, Political Periods and the Development of Partisan Orientations," *Journal of Politics* 53 (1991): 742-63.

⁵The Hakka are rarely separated from the Fulao in data analysis. But studies show that the Hakka express political opinions significantly different from the Fulao. See Huang Shuanfan, *Yuyan, shehui yu zuqun yishi: Taiwan yuyan shehuixue de yanjiu* (Language, society and ethnicity: Study of Taiwan linguistic sociology) (Taipei: The Crane Publishing Co., 1993), 191-226.

Figure 1
Division of Taiwan's Political Generations



First generation: Members completed elementary education in 1949. Mainlanders grew up on the mainland. On the other hand, Fulao and Hakka members experienced life under Japanese occupation. Some of the Fulao and Hakka respondents received partial education under the Japanese colonial system. All of them are currently older than sixty.

Second generation: Most members were born and/or grew up between 1949 and 1965, when Taiwan was economically poorer than later period. These respondents are between forty-four and fifty-nine years old in 1996.

Third generation: Members grew up in an economically prosperous yet politically authoritative Taiwan. Their ages range between thirty and forty-three in 1996.

Fourth generation: Members became eligible to vote in the year after the establishment of the DPP in 1986. Democratization was under way when they first entered the world of politics. Their ages are between twenty and twenty-nine in 1996.

The results in table 2 are mixed, as the percentages of some opinions remain stable across generations, while others are varied. We may observe the following:

First, while the largest groups are those who declared uncertainty about cross-Strait relations, there were different types of uncertainty. Younger generations tended to be more willing to change if changes in the environment required them to do so, as the proportion of the "wait and see" category increased with each descending generation. In the first generation, only 13.3 percent adopted such an attitude, while in the fourth generation, the percentage increased to 38.2.

Second, older generations leaned more heavily to the "non-attitude" answer; they were unwilling to speak out or they did not have opinion. Forty percent of the eldest generation respondents had this "non-attitude," while the youngest had slightly more than 3 percent, indicating a large generation gap.

Third, the independence position gained strength among younger generation respondents, but not much. Surprisingly, the percentage of respondents seeking unification increased dramatically in the youngest group; compared to the other three generations, which hovered around 16 to 18 percent, 28.8 percent of the youngest group wished to maintain the status quo and seek unification in the future.

This might be a harbinger of future trends, but why did this come about? It is not easy to find enough evidence to make a solid conclusion in this paper. One may speculate that this is a natural result of life-cycle phenomena. For example, before one gets sufficient experience, one's attitudes are still subject to change. The youngest group may thus still carry some values they learned in school. Taiwan schools do not provide information encouraging Taiwan independence; on the contrary, most of the material circulated among teenagers emphasizes the value of unification. Therefore, the value of unification instilled by schools may still dominate the younger generation's attitudes. Also, it could be true that the meaning of "unification" varies for individuals of different generations. Further studies need to be done to explore this possibility.

Finally, extremists were distributed evenly among the four generation groups. Around 2 percent of each group supported immediate unification, and around 3 to 5 percent supported immediate independence. The relative size of these two "fundamentalist" groups is small, but if we translate this 5 percent into population figures, it would amount to half a million individuals. It is not difficult to imagine the instability they can bring to society.

Our next task is analyzing the four generations according to the respondents' ethnicity. The twelve ethnic generation groups' distributions of unification attitudes are shown in table 3. In the table, the six different attitudes are recoded into three categories. The three categories are: leaning toward unification, maintaining the status quo, and leaning toward independence. The non-attitude category remains the same.

The trends demonstrated in table 3 are basically that mainlander respondents are significantly unification-oriented and independence gains support mainly from the Fulao. These tendencies were quite evenly distributed across generations in each ethnic bloc. In addition, some other phenomena are worth noting:

First, as mentioned above, unification gained quite a proportion of support from the youngest generation respondents. This was true for all three ethnic groups, and particularly dramatic with the youngest Hakka. If this is a life-cycle phenomenon, there is no satisfactory explanation for the young Hakka's unusual performance.

Second, there were very clear distinctions between Hakka and Fulao groups in the analysis. For example, first and second generation Hakka respondents were very close to mainlanders in supporting Taiwan independence. However, third and fourth generation Hakka

Table 2
Distribution of Attitudes on Unification/Independence Issue, by Generations

	Immediate unification	Maintain status quo, seek unification	Maintain status quo, wait and see	Maintain status quo permanently	Maintain status quo, seek independence	Immediate independence	No attitude
First generation	2.1	17.3	13.3	19.5	4.3	3.5	40.0
Second generation	2.0	16.7	25.6	20.0	9.3	4.7	21.7
Third generation	1.7	18.7	36.1	18.2	12.7	3.9	8.7
Fourth generation	2.0	28.8	38.2	13.3	11.4	3.1	3.2
Total	1.9	20.1	31.6	17.8	10.7	3.9	14.0

Note: Chi-square = 404.33, d.f. = 18, $p < .0001$.

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

Table 3
Ethnicity, Generation, and Attitudes on the Unification/Independence Issue

Ethnicity	Generation	Leaning toward unification	Maintain status quo	Leaning toward independence	No attitude	Number
Fulao	First	8.6	27.4	11.4	52.5	244
	Second	14.3	45.5	16.3	24.0	526
	Third	18.4	54.4	18.2	9.0	1,132
	Fourth	27.7	52.7	16.0	3.6	476
Mainlander	First	51.6	40.4	1.1	6.7	89
	Second	41.7	45.1	9.7	5.6	72
	Third	31.4	58.4	8.8	1.5	137
	Fourth	43.0	45.4	6.5	2.2	93
Hakka	First	16.2	48.6	0	35.1	37
	Second	24.7	50.5	4.5	20.2	89
	Third	23.3	52.8	16.3	7.6	197
	Fourth	41.9	41.9	16.1	0	62

Note: "Leaning toward unification" consists of the two categories "immediate unification" and "maintain status quo and pursue unification"; "leaning toward independence" includes those who either checked "immediate independence" or "maintain status quo and pursue independence"; between the two categories are those who said they prefer maintaining the status quo permanently or waiting until a better solution is found.

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

were quite similar to their Fulao counterparts: in both cases, around 16 percent of them supported independence.

Third, almost no independence supporters were found among the oldest mainlander and Hakka groups. Among mainlanders of other generations, the percentage of independence supporters increased, though only slightly.

The Variation of Behavioral Patterns: The Case of Presidential Preference

The discrepancies of attitude between various generation groups are worth further attention only when they exert influence on the public's political behavior. Since the data analyzed were taken during the 1996 Taiwan presidential campaign, it was convenient to check if various issue-vote relationships existed among different generation groups. In other words, we wanted to check whether attitudes on the unification issue played different roles for different generation groups in guiding their voting choices.

To do so, sixteen logistic regressions were used to interpret voters' voting intentions before the election. Each function represented a major factor influencing a generation group's vote for a presidential candidate. For each of the four groups, we obtained four logistic regression models for the four candidates.

Factors Explaining Presidential Preference

The dependent variable in the logistic model was a vote for the candidate (1 if the respondent intended to vote for the candidate, 0 if otherwise). Independent variables included in the models were variables commonly used to interpret Taiwanese voters' behavior, including issue position (in this case, the unification/independence issue), candidate evaluation, party identification, and ethnicity. The nature of their influence in Taiwanese elections is explained in the following:

Respondent's position on the unification issue. To use issue position as a guide for voting, one must hold an opinion on that issue and perceive each candidate's position. Ideally, we need to compute the differences in candidate-respondent positions perceived by respondents to explain their voting choices. However, the majority of respondents were not familiar with most of the candidates' positions, and we would have ended up with only a small sample if we demanded complete information in this case. For our purposes, including the respondent's unification issue attitude in the model was appropriate so as to compare its role in different functions. Scores ranging from 1 (immediate unification) through 6 (immediate independence) with four other positions (2 = maintaining the status quo and seeking unification; 3 = maintaining the status quo and waiting for further development; 4 = maintaining the status quo permanently; and 5 = maintaining the status quo and seeking independence) were given.

Party identification. In Taiwan, researchers have gradually accepted that the public's psychological ties with the major parties are a major factor influencing voters' voting behavior. For convenient interpretation, three dummy variables were used to represent three major partisan attachments (e.g., KMT = 1 and all others = 0, in order to contrast those who identify with the Kuomintang and those who do not).

Candidate evaluation. The voters' appraisal of a candidate is probably the best predictor of potential votes for the candidate. Strong favorable evaluation of an attractive candidate may override

the long-term influence of party identification and invite supporters of other parties to defect.⁶

In this survey, evaluation of the candidates was made by asking the respondents four questions: "Among Lee Teng-hui, Peng Ming-min, Lin Yang-kang, and Chen Li-an, who do you think is the warmest to the public?" "Who do you think is the cleanest?" "Who knows the public's needs the best?" and "Who provides the strongest leadership?" The frequency a candidate was mentioned by the respondent is counted to form the respondent's evaluation score for that candidate (4 = naming the same candidate in all four questions; 0 = not mentioned at all).

Findings and Discussion

The variables included in our analysis models did well in explaining voting choice, correctly predicting the voting intentions of more than 90 percent of the respondents. Exceptions appeared in models predicting votes for Lee Teng-hui. The correct prediction rates of the four groups' votes for Lee were all around 80 percent. This suggests that if we want to do a better job in explaining and predicting votes for Lee Teng-hui, we might need to add further variables, such as attitudes on the PRC's missile exercises. The major aim of this paper, however, is not to find the best model for prediction. Instead, we want to know if the impact of unification attitudes on voting decisions was different across generations. From statistics in table 4a through table 4d, we found some significant patterns.

The impact of attitudes on the unification issue. The explanatory power of respondents' positions on the unification/independence issue was different in equations for different candidates; it also played different roles for different generation groups.

Attitudes for independence were a significant variable in explaining votes for DPP candidate Peng Ming-min. This was true for all four groups, as all coefficients were positive, indicating that when one moved closer to the immediate independence extreme, one's odds of voting for Peng increased. All the coefficients were statistically significant ($p < .05$ or smaller). This result should surprise no one,

⁶Angus E. Campbell, "Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change," in *Elections and the Political Order*, by Angus E. Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 40-62.

since Peng's main theme in his campaign was Taiwan independence. It is evident that most respondents perceived his position quite clearly and quite a few of them used this knowledge to guide their decision when considering voting or not voting for Peng.

A slightly different pattern existed in models predicting votes for Lee Teng-hui and independent candidate Lin Yang-kang. In both cases, only one coefficient achieved statistical significance. This occurred in the same generation group—the second generation (those who were between forty-four and fifty-nine years old). Both coefficients were negative, indicating that when one moved toward independence, the probability of voting for either Lee or Lin decreased. Why the second generation was the only group which considered where Lee Teng-hui and Lin Yang-kang stood on the unification-independence continuum cannot be answered from the data available. Lee Teng-hui's position is vague; he could be labeled with any position between immediate unification and immediate independence. On the other hand, Lin's position was quite clear, as he consistently expressed his strong opposition against Taiwan independence.

The public's attitude on the unification/independence issue was irrelevant in votes for independent candidate Chen Li-an, as all coefficients of this variable across the four generations were not significant. This is consistent with Chen's campaign, as although he occasionally expressed anti-independence sentiments, this issue was not a major focus of his campaign.

In general, the public responded to the candidates' positions on the unification issue. They perceived Peng Ming-min's support for independence and were also clear about Chen Li-an's de-emphasis of the issue. As a result, the public acted according to what they perceived. However, we also found that generational discrepancies existed. In deciding if they wanted to vote for Lee Teng-hui, second generation respondents cared about Lee's unification/independence position much more so than other generation groups. It could be that Lee's position was not clear to them, or a secondary factor compared to others.

Dominance of election-related factors. The two election-related variables (candidate evaluation and party identification) were very powerful predictors of voter tendencies. We find from tables 4a through 4d that all coefficients of respondent's evaluations of the candidates were positive. Positive evaluation of a particular candidate brought a favorable voting decision. All but one coefficient were statistically significant ($p < .01$ or $p < .001$, with the value of the

only insignificant coefficient .08). We are thus very sure that candidate evaluation played a key role in influencing one's vote in the presidential election.

The respondents' party identification also explained the vote quite well. The probability that those who identified with the KMT voted for Lee Teng-hui was significantly higher than other voters who did not identify with the KMT (see table 4a). Similarly, those who identified with the DPP strongly supported Peng Ming-min (see table 4b); those who identified with the NP heavily supported Lin Yang-kang (except the first generation, which showed little difference; it had a coefficient of .09, as seen in table 4c). Since Chen Li-an did not carry any party label, we did not expect any group which identified with a certain party to show a particular preference for him, and indeed the odds of party identifiers voting for him were smaller than voting for others. All party identification coefficients except one in table 4d were negative, although only two middle-aged groups (second and third generation KMT supporters) achieved statistical significance. The only exception was the oldest generation NP supporters, whose coefficient was nearly zero, indicating that identifying with the NP had nothing to do with voting for Chen Li-an.

Conclusion

The unification/independence issue is key to the development of politics in Taiwan and cross-Straits relations. The public's attitudes on this issue are diverse, ranging between supporting immediate unification and supporting immediate independence. The majority of the Taiwan public stand between these two extremes, preferring the status quo at present, although some seek future unification with China; some seek a full independence; and a third group wishes to maintain the status quo indefinitely. On the aggregate level, the distribution of these positions has been quite stable. However, as this paper has shown, there are variations on the individual level.

The concept of "political generation" has been applied to distinguish attitudinal discrepancies among different groups. Survey data were used to analyze the different distributions of unification/independence attitude among the various generations of Taiwan's three major ethnic groups: the Fulao, Hakka, and mainlanders. Discrepancies were found; especially noticeable is that the youngest generation Fulao and Hakka tended to be more supportive of a

Table 4a
A Logistic Model of Votes for Lee Teng-hui

	First generation	Second generation	Generation Group Third generation	Fourth generation
Respondent's position on unification	-.02	-.27*	-.003	-.14
Respondent's evaluation of the candidate	1.36*	1.16***	1.03***	1.02***
Party identification:				
KMT	2.02***	1.72***	1.47***	1.03***
DPP	.18	-.10	.25	-.58
NP	-.50	-.65	-.56*	-1.30***
Ethnicity:				
Fulao	-1.37	-.69	.04	.15
Mainlander	-1.73*	-.14	-.78*	-.27
Constant	-1.31	-1.71	-1.79	-1.21**
Number of cases	217	534	1,352	615
% of correct prediction by model	84.79	81.65	78.40	77.56

Note: Entries are coefficients for the independent variables (Bs); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; party identification and ethnicity are dummy variables, i.e., listed variables = 1, else = 0.

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

Table 4b
A Logistic Model of Votes for Peng Ming-min

	First generation	Second generation	Generation Group Third generation	Fourth generation
Respondent's position on unification	1.14*	.48**	.31*	.47*
Respondent's evaluation of the candidate	.95	1.19***	1.36***	1.41***
Party identification:				
KMT	-8.12	-1.62	-.60	-6.92

Table 4b (Continued)

	First generation	Second generation	Third generation	Fourth generation
DPP	3.20**	2.11***	3.31***	2.22***
NP	-6.45	-6.06	.33	-.54
Ethnicity:				
Fulao	8.16	.79	-.45	2.41*
Mainlander	2.10	.45	-.52	1.00
Constant	-16.91	-6.11***	-5.52***	-8.09***
Number of cases	217	534	1,352	615
% of correct prediction by model	97.70	94.76	95.12	95.93

Note: Entries are coefficients for the independent variables (Bs); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; party identification and ethnicity are dummy variables, i.e., listed variables = 1, else = 0.

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

Table 4c
A Logistic Model of Votes for Lin Yang-kang

	First generation	Second generation	Third generation	Fourth generation
Respondent's position on unification	.15	.89**	-.21	-.15
Respondent's evaluation of the candidate	1.65***	1.44***	1.39***	1.40***
Party identification:				
KMT	-1.71*	-.31	-.21	-.09
DPP	-2.56	1.14	-.14	.36
NP	.09	2.95***	2.15***	2.25***
Ethnicity:				
Fulao	6.58	1.44	.28	.71
Mainlander	8.30	2.49*	.83	1.03
Constant	-10.32	-3.24***	-3.37***	-3.69
Number of cases	217	534	1,352	615
% of correct prediction by model	93.09	94.38	92.97	90.57

Note: Entries are coefficients for the independent variables (Bs); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; party identification and ethnicity are dummy variables, i.e., listed variables = 1, else = 0.

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

Table 4d
A Logistic Model of Votes for Chen Li-an

	First generation	Second generation	Third generation	Fourth generation
Respondent's position on unification	1.03	-.27	-.13	.05
Respondent's evaluation of the candidate	2.18**	1.77***	1.38***	1.90***
Party identification:				
KMT	-2.93	-1.94*	-1.60**	-.68
DPP	-1.84	-.92	-.35	-.40
NP	.06	-.53	-.40	-.87
Ethnicity:				
Fulao	-.51	-.43	-.13	-.26
Mainlander	8.61	-1.66	-.51	-.28
Constant	-16.61	-3.15***	-3.18***	-4.00***
Number of cases	217	534	1,352	615
% of correct prediction by model	98.16	97.75	93.20	91.06

Note: Entries are coefficients for the independent variables (Bs); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; party identification and ethnicity are dummy variables, i.e., listed variables = 1, else = 0.

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

unified Taiwan and China. This could be a life-cycle phenomenon and subject to change in the future. However, generational differences were also visible and had an impact on respondents' presidential preferences.

The findings in this paper support the claim that we must take social, economic, and political environment into consideration when we think about "generational politics." Generations in politics are not a matter of natural age; they are rather related to experiences a group of people share when they interact with the political world. The policy implication from these findings is that different generation groups are thinking and acting differently on the unification/independence issue. While the elder generation is currently formulating policy governing cross-Strait relations, they need to closely monitor the differences between them and the younger voters of Taiwan.