

Utilizing Conjoint Survey Experiments to Discern the Preferences of Taiwanese Electorate Regarding Legislative Candidates

Cheng-Han Huang and Tung-Hung Hsu

Abstract

Beyond party affiliation, various personal attributes of political figures also play a crucial role in voter choice. However, previous research methods have limited our ability to ascertain which attributes are most significantly associated with voter preferences. Conjoint Survey Experiments offer a robust causal inference method to elucidate the causal relationships between different attributes and voter preferences. Focusing on Taiwan's regional legislative elections, this study designed conjoint survey experiments based on simulated election pamphlets to investigate these questions. The findings reveal that voters indeed exhibit specific preferences for attributes such as facial features, age, educational background, and policy stances of candidates. Candidate appearance, particularly matching a "baby face," being younger, possessing higher educational qualifications, and engaging in specific professions, all influence voter preferences.

Additionally, within the realm of policy stances, an emphasis on national defense and security issues reflects the unique political and economic environment in Taiwan. This study also observes variances in the distribution of candidate attribute preferences among subgroups with different demographic characteristics, noting varying degrees of interaction affecting the initial causal relationships. By demonstrating the specificity of voter attribute preferences in Taiwan's distinctive contextual background, this study serves as an intriguing research template not only for East Asian studies but also for emerging democracies' efforts toward democratic consolidation.

Keywords : Conjoint Survey Experiments, Voter Behavior, Candidate Preferences, Causal Inference, Legislative Elections

1. INTRODUCTION

Not only political parties but also various personal attributes of politicians are crucial factors in voter choice. However, due to limitations in past research methods, determining which attributes are more correlated with voter preferences has been challenging. Conjoint survey experiments offer a method with strong causal validity to clarify the causal relationship between different attributes and voter preferences. This study focuses on Taiwan's legislative elections and employs simulated election pamphlets in conjoint survey experiments to investigate these issues. Our findings reveal that voters indeed have specific preferences regarding candidates' facial features, age, educational background, and policy positions. Additionally, the study observes differences in the distribution of subgroup preferences for candidate attributes based on various demographic characteristics, indicating varying levels of interaction effects on the original causal relationships. By demonstrating the uniqueness of candidate attribute preferences among Taiwanese voters in their specific context, this study aims to serve as an intriguing research template for East Asian studies and even for emerging democracies' democratic consolidation efforts.

As global attention on the Western Pacific region grows due to China's increasing assertiveness, Taiwan's significance rises. Despite its complex history and international status, Taiwan thrives economically and democratically. This democratic context, amidst geopolitical tensions, prompts questions about Taiwanese political preferences and candidate attributes. Employing conjoint survey experiments, this study delves into these issues, offering valuable insights into Taiwanese electoral dynamics. The main contribution of this study lies in employing conjoint survey experiments using simulated election brochures as a medium to analyze the effects of different stages in the causal funnel model and how candidate attributes influence voter choices in a causally valid manner.

2. TAIWAN'S POLITICAL DIVISIONS AND SOCIAL RIFTS

According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), political divisions are a reflection of societal disparities, originating from a nation's historical socioeconomic development. Thus, every country has its unique political division context. In Taiwan, unlike Western democracies, political parties' survival depends not on liberal/conservative or left/right ideologies but rather on divergent perceptions of national identity. Owing to historical circumstances, Taiwan's

political landscape has been profoundly impacted by its interactions with China. The relationship between Taiwan and China oscillates between distance and closeness, influenced by economic coercion and military threats. These historical factors have shaped societal divisions, making attitudes toward China and perceptions of national identity the focal points of Taiwan's political landscape (Achen and Wang, 2017).

Political elites play a crucial role in determining whether an issue becomes a significant societal divide central to party politics. By reframing partisan issues with new topics, elites can influence public perceptions and behaviors, prompting realignment within the political system along these new issue dimensions (Carmines and Stimson, 1989). During Taiwan's early democratization phase, amidst robust economic development, issues such as wealth redistribution and national identity weren't focal political concerns; instead, the primary discourse revolved around political reform or anti-reform. However, as the momentum of political reform stabilized, even though economic development and national security remained paramount concerns for the populace, there was a fundamental consensus among voters on these fronts. Yet, discussions on economic development and national security in Taiwan invariably intersect with China, encompassing debates on closer economic integration with “Mainland China” and strategies to counter CCP’s military threats. Consequently, the most critical political issues in Taiwan revolve around the dichotomy of unification versus independence, significantly shaping the national electoral landscape (Sheng and Liao, 2017; Tan and Ho, 2017). Presently, Taiwan's two major parties are the Kuomintang (KMT), advocating for closer ties with China, and the DPP, rooted in the indigenous democratization movement, advocating for maintaining a certain distance from China. Apart from these, there are other parliamentary parties like the TPP, which maintains a more neutral stance on China-related issues while prioritizing alternative political agendas.

Taiwan's political landscape is not easily categorized along the typical left/right ideological spectrum, as observed in many countries. Research shows that a majority of Taiwanese lack a clear understanding of left/right ideologies, with most opting for a neutral stance (Chen, 2003; Hsiao, Cheng, and Achen, 2017). This phenomenon is rooted in Taiwan's unique historical context, where economic benefits were broadly distributed due to widespread small-scale entrepreneurship, limiting class consciousness and class-based conflicts. Major political parties, in response to social redistribution issues in the 1980s, positioned themselves as advocates for the underprivileged (Sheng and Liao, 2017; Hsiao, Cheng, and Achen, 2017). Additionally,

Taiwan's historical anti-communist stance has led to an automatic alignment of preferred parties with the right, despite a general lack of ideological clarity. Consequently, Taiwanese voters' support for policies tends to reflect partisan preference rather than ideological orientation.

In examining issues of not left vs. right but unification vs. independence, we can observe that while issue voting still exists in Taiwan, there are significant differences in key issue divisions compared to other countries. As for other contentious issues widely debated in Western countries, such as immigration/anti-immigration and liberal/conservative stances, can similar levels of discussion be found in Taiwan? In 2019, through special legislative amendments, Taiwan became the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage.¹ However, this does not necessarily signify a universal stance in Taiwan. After all, the previous year saw two-thirds of voters oppose same-sex marriage being legally treated the same as heterosexual marriage in civil law. During those one or two years, the discussion on same-sex marriage, which falls within the liberal/conservative political dimension, was highly intense and became a focal point of political contention. But is this merely a unique case? This paper also aims to explore this aspect.

In Campbell et al.'s (1960) funnel of causality model, apart from the relatively stable party identification, voters' voting behavior is also significantly influenced by their evaluations of candidates. These evaluations are derived from candidates' self-promotion of personal qualities and their proposed policies. The candidate-centric mode of political operation has led the United States through several party realignments (Wattenberg, 1991). In Taiwan, due to historical tradition, emphasis leans more towards candidates rather than parties (Fu, 1998; Hawang, 1996; Wang and Chen, 2017).

The majority of Taiwan's legislators are elected from regional constituencies. In 2008, electoral reforms shifted from the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) to the Single-Member-District System (SMD). This reform changed the representation in local

¹ On May 24, 2017, the Judicial Yuan (constitutional review institution in Taiwan) issued Interpretation No. 748, ruling that the current Civil Code's lack of protection for the marriage freedom and equality rights of same-sex couples is unconstitutional. The Legislative Yuan was required to complete the amendment or enactment of relevant laws within two years to safeguard the rights of same-sex marriage. Subsequently, three nationwide referendums on same-sex marriage arose due to the aforementioned ruling. As a result of the following referendum outcomes, the Executive Yuan had no choice but to propose the Act for Implementation of J.Y. Interpretation No. 748 to circumvent the issue of amending the Civil Code.

constituencies from multiple representatives in a central district to a single representative in smaller districts, prompting candidates to seek majority support from voters. Consequently, candidates became more focused on securing individual votes. For example, Zheng's (2011) qualitative interviews with Taiwanese legislators revealed a preference for locally-oriented policies under the new system. This observation finds further support in empirical political studies (Liao, Li, and Chen, 2013; Lin, 2010; Huang, 2020).

When it comes to evaluating candidates, *The American Voter* suggests that people base their assessments on three factors: past records and experiences, abilities, and personal characteristics (Campbell et al., 1960). In situations where voters lack sufficient knowledge about the candidates themselves, they rely on available public information to make their evaluations and select their preferred candidates. In Taiwan, prior to each election, the Central Election Commission (CEC) distribute official election pamphlets (選舉公報) to the registered addresses of all voters (Taiwanese voter qualifications do not necessitate additional registration; individuals only need to meet age and residency requirements, without being subject to public participation administrative measures such as guardianship declaration). These election pamphlets not only include candidates' basic information like photos, age, gender, and education level (verified by CEC), but also allow candidates to freely express their work experience and policy positions without additional scrutiny from CEC. While voters don't solely base their decisions on the content of these pamphlets, they serve as a platform for candidates to promote themselves. The public information provided in these pamphlets helps us understand which information candidates believe voters prefer (see Figure 1 for an illustration of Taiwan's official election pamphlets).

Empirical research indicates that election pamphlets influence voter perceptions of candidates, thus impacting voting behavior. Hsiao (2023) conducted a study using data from the Taiwan Election and Democratization Study (TEDS), which revealed that exposure to election pamphlets leads to greater divergence in voter evaluations of candidates, consequently affecting voting behavior based on these evaluations. However, while we found that reading election pamphlets influenced the variance in voter evaluations of candidates, it significantly affected preferences for presidential candidates but had minimal impact on preferences for parliamentary candidates. The author suggests that this difference may be because legislative candidates in regional districts are more closely connected to constituents' daily lives compared to presidential candidates, hence voters may not rely solely on election pamphlets to form their

evaluations of legislative candidates.

When examining Taiwanese voters' preferences for parliamentary candidates, previous research has primarily focused on factors like party affiliation, issue preferences on key topics, and preferences for candidates' personal traits such as education, age, and appearance. However, with numerous potential factors influencing voter decisions, it's challenging to discern which attributes play a decisive role in Taiwanese voters' candidate preferences. To address this challenge, this study employs conjoint survey experiments to simulate common election pamphlets among Taiwanese voters. This simulation incorporates candidates' personal information, policy positions, and party affiliations to better understand voters' preferences for candidates. By using simulated election pamphlets, we control for other factors that may influence voter preferences under real-world conditions (such as campaigning, bribery or individual preferences for real-world candidates), thus examining how voters process information, whether it's candidates' personal traits or policy preferences, influencing their evaluations of candidates when presented with information in the election pamphlets.

FIGURE 1. The 11th Legislative Yuan Election Pamphlets in Taiwan

name and photo	號次·姓名 4 洪孟楷	education 美國南加州大學國際公共政策及管理系 碩士 國立台灣大學政治學系 碩士	experience 第10屆立法委員 國民黨團副書記長 交通委員會召集委員 立法院動物福利促進會發起人 嘉義市政府文化局局長
name	政見		
info	<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">堅定力挺 做事的人</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.5em;">專業立委 繼續服務</div> <div style="width: 80%;"> <p>交通專業! 就是洪孟楷!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 林口、五股交流道改善完工, 圓山交流道改善開工 ✓ 淡江大橋2025完工、淡北道路農曆年前正式開工 ✓ 爭取八里-淡水輕軌、泰山-板橋輕軌、林口-龜山輕軌 <p>青年發展、在地就業; 經濟優先、婦幼關懷!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 淡海科技園區, 增加在地就業機會 ✓ 林口影視園區、國際AI智慧園區 帶動經濟發展 ✓ 泰山場仔洲全區零碳建築、八里台北港設置自由經濟專區 <p>觀光大發展、北海岸大繁榮!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 淺水灣、白沙灣自行車串連, 北台灣最佳騎乘線 ✓ 三芝海上觀景平台親水園區、石門洞打造國家級風景區 </div> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.5em;">洪孟楷政見承諾</div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 肅槍緝毒打詐 強治安掃黑幫 ● 0-6歲國家養 協助育兒養老 ● 老人健保免費 減少城鄉差距 ● 80歲以上長者 免除巴氏量表 ● 擴大投資醫療 補助防癌篩檢 ● 設特偵專案組 重啟兩岸交流 ● 依法執行死刑 社縮假釋黑箱 		
基本資料	<p>出生年月日: 72年1月1日 性別: 男</p> <p>party 臺北市</p> <p>推薦之政黨</p> <p>中國國民黨</p>		

3. APPLICATION OF CONJOINT SURVEY EXPERIMENTS

Survey experiments in political science help disentangle causal relationships by controlling for non-experimental variables, but they often fail to identify which specific factors lead to variations in outcomes. Conjoint survey experiments address this limitation by randomly assigning various attributes to profiles, enabling researchers to analyze respondents' preferences and attitudes across multiple factors (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). Originally used in market research, conjoint analysis has since expanded into social sciences, including political science, where it has been applied to study attitudes toward immigration (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Yamamoto 2015), public assessments of resolve in international relations (Kertzer, Renshon, and Yarhi-Milo 2021), and voter preferences in elections (Bansak et al. 2021a; Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto 2020).

In election research, conjoint survey experiments reveal how voters prioritize various

attributes of political figures, such as policy positions and personal valences, over other identity attributes. Studies have shown that voters often base their choices on candidates' policy stances rather than on their background or subjective valences (Franchino and Zucchini 2015; Bansak, Bechtel, and Margalit 2021). This method has been used across different countries, including Italy, Norway, and Japan, to demonstrate the causal relationship between candidates' issue positions and voter behavior, highlighting the effectiveness of conjoint survey experiments in capturing the nuances of voter decision-making (Hanretty, Lauderdale, and Vivyan 2020; Arnesen, Duell, and Johannesson 2019).

Conjoint survey experiments offer several advantages that facilitate their utilization in the political science domain, including (1) the ability to address the influence of multiple characteristic attributes on candidate selection; (2) the potential to maximize the reduction of issues related to insufficient internal validity in experiments, especially with the paired conjoint design exhibiting optimal performance (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Yamamoto 2015); and (3) the capability to effectively tackle the problem of Social Desirability Bias (SDB), enabling respondents to provide honest responses during the experiment (Christensen, La Rosa, and Grönlund 2020; Horiuchi, Markovich, and Yamamoto 2022). Building upon these advantages, this study integrates Taiwan's distinctive election brochures during experimentation. Through conjoint survey experiments, we can incorporate various candidate attributes into analysis, examining whether candidates' proposed policies serve as significant determinants of voters' voting behavior when confronted with multiple attribute information. This approach not only mitigates non-genuine voting behavior of voters under social desirability bias, aligning their choices more closely with natural preferences, but also facilitates the exploration of the causal effects between different attributes on voters' voting decisions, thereby offering insights into their directionality and strength.

Considering the mixed member majoritarian system (MMM) for parliamentary elections in Taiwan, where regional legislative seats are determined by a single-member plurality system, it's evident that under Taiwan's prevailing political landscape, single-district legislative seats often reflect a showdown between two major parties (KMT vs. DPP). In contrast to proportional representation systems for local councilor elections, this study, drawing from research by Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto (2020) and Bansak et al. (2021a), argues that paired conjoint survey experiments are more apt for implementation. This method mirrors real-world voter decision-making, where respondents must navigate choices among candidates

across various dimensions and attributes. Furthermore, the design of forced choice allows us to evaluate the relative impact of each attribute within one conjoint analysis table compared to another (Bansak et al. 2021b; Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Yamamoto 2015).

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study endeavors to tackle two inquiries: what personal traits do Taiwanese voters favor in candidates, and which political issues resonate with them. Both can be scrutinized through conjoint survey experiments utilizing hypothetical parliamentary candidate pamphlets. Concerning the random attribute count, recognizing that individuals have a limited capacity to process simultaneous information, when the variety of message categories surpasses a certain threshold, individuals may opt to overlook certain information or even respond with uncertainty, potentially diminishing the significance of causal relationships (Krosnick 1991). As illustrated by Miller (1994) in a renowned article in psychology, individuals can effectively process only about nine messages concurrently. Hence, this study restricts the scale of experimental attributes to a total of eight sets, encompassing one set featuring candidate personal details (age and gender) in images, three sets of candidate personal details, and most importantly, four sets of candidate policy stances.

4.1 AGE, GENDER, AND FACIAL FEATURES

As elected officials gain tenure, they often amass more resources, giving them advantages in re-election campaigns and contributing to an increase in the average age of elected legislators. For instance, in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan elections from the 8th to the 10th terms, the average ages of elected legislators were 52, 49.94, and 55.76 years, respectively. Despite the older average age, voters generally favor younger candidates, as seen in Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto's (2020) conjoint survey experiment on Japanese voters. This trend may be mirrored in Taiwan, where there is a strong emphasis on "youth participation" in politics, with political parties and candidates advocating for opportunities for younger generations.

In terms of gender, research shows that while voters often hold stereotypes favoring candidates with more masculine traits (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002), gender may have minimal impact on voter preferences. Studies on voters in Britain, the

United States, New Zealand, Finland, and Japan (Campbell and Cowley 2014; Dolan and Lynch 2014; Coffé and Theiss-Morse 2016; Coffé and Schoultz 2020; Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto 2020) suggest that gender does not significantly influence voter choices.

However, voter gender can affect the strength of these stereotypes, as male voters may show a stronger preference for male candidates, a trend observed by Johns and Shephard (2007), and Yang and Lin (2013) in Taiwanese voters. Despite Taiwan's relatively high proportion of female parliamentarians, women in Taiwan still face disadvantages in politics, as evidenced by the limited representation of women in key government positions, including the cabinet.

Past studies on candidate traits have primarily focused on issues ownership, personality, and competence evaluations (Wang and Chen 2017), with less emphasis on physical appearance. However, physical attractiveness often correlates with positive characteristics, giving candidates social advantages (Hatfield and Sprecher 1986). This attractiveness can influence election outcomes, as seen in U.S. congressional and Canadian parliamentary elections, where more attractive candidates are likelier to win (Efrain and Patterson 1974; Todorov et al. 2005). Additionally, voters not only value candidate appearance but also whether it aligns with expected masculine qualities (Little et al. 2007). The "babyface effect" shows that candidates with youthful features, such as large eyes and a small chin, are perceived as more honest and warm, which further enhances their appeal (Berry and McArthur 1985; Masip, Garrido, and Herrero 2004).

In Taiwan, studies by Li and Luoh (2008) and Chang, Lee, and Cheng (2017) have investigated the causal relationship between candidate appearance and voter preferences. However, these studies mostly involve additional participants rating the appearance of actual candidates, followed by regression analysis correlating these ratings with actual election results. The former found that candidates rated higher by participants were more likely to win, while the latter found that candidates with features defined as "small face, big eyes, small ears, small mouth" had a better chance of gaining voter favor. Similar research methods can be observed outside Taiwan, such as Da Silva and Novais's (2017) study in Brazil or Poutvaara, Jordahl, and Berggren's (2009) study on Finnish voters. However, those research approaches also presents some challenges. Since the evaluation of appearance relies on additional participants, it is difficult to standardize the definition of attractiveness and to directly equate participant preferences with overall voter preferences. Furthermore, it is challenging to clarify the true causal effects of candidate attributes on voter choices under the

candidates' multiple attributes. To address this, this paper proposes using rapidly developing artificial intelligence software to tackle this issue through "Text-to-image model" methods.

Midjourney is an artificial intelligence program developed by the eponymous laboratory, capable of generating images based on text descriptions. Through this AI model, we can standardize and adjust certain facial features based on predefined parameters. This approach offers several advantages. Firstly, specific parameter settings enable a certain level of standardization in defining facial features. Despite the AI program's evolving drawing abilities and style due to continuous self-learning, the standardized parameters help maintain a certain degree of consistency, ensuring reproducibility. Moreover, while the AI program generates virtual characters by referencing real-life individuals, it does not represent actual people. Thus, respondents' perceptions of candidate appearance and voting choices are not influenced by external factors, ensuring a clearer causal relationship.

In practical implementation, this paper follows the definitions of "babyface" provided by Berry and McArthur (1985) and Masip, Garrido, and Herrero (2004), categorizing facial variables into four binary variables: eyes, nose, mouth, face. These variables are included in the text submitted to Midjourney. Additionally, considering age and gender as crucial reference factors for voter evaluation of candidates, this paper also incorporates them into the text. Gender is categorized as male or female, while age is set at 35, 45, 55, and 65 years old. This results in a total of 128 permutations and combinations.

Using the example from Table 1, We illustrate how the candidate texts differ. The candidate described as a 55-year-old female with big eyes, small lip, a small nose, and a slim face, differs significantly from the candidate described as a 35-year-old female with small eyes, a big mouth, a big nose, and a slim face. These differences in facial features (age, eyes, mouth, nose) between the two texts demonstrate the effectiveness of using the Midjourney artificial intelligence software in conjunction with fixed parameterized text settings to control the appearance of candidates in simulated election pamphlets.

After introducing the presentation method of these attributes, this paper categorizes candidates who meet three or more definitions of the babyface effect as having a babyface, thus classifying 1/4 of the generated candidate photos accordingly. The paper first proposes hypothesis H1.


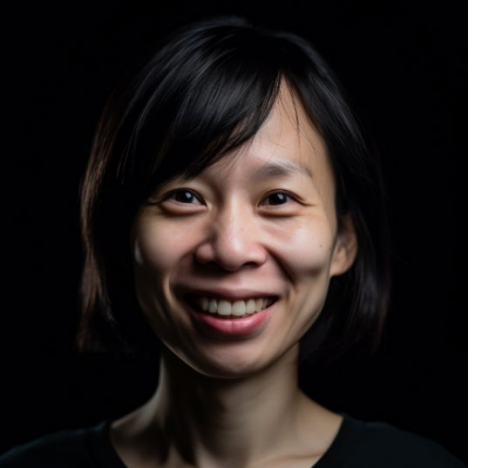
H1: Voters prefer candidates who fit the definition of a babyface.

While we can easily imagine voters preferring candidates with attractive appearances, the specific preference pattern may be influenced by other attributes of the candidates or personal attributes of the voters. Based on this, the paper proposes several additional hypotheses:

H1A: The causal effect of participants' preferences for candidate appearance and choice is influenced by the consistency of party affiliation between the candidate and the participant.

H1B: Male participants prefer candidates with a babyface more than female participants do.

TABLE 1: Demonstration of Simulated Candidate Photo Generation

Generated Photo	Prompt
	A smiling 55 years old female political figure with big eyes, small lips, small nose, thin face from Taiwan, who is very beautiful. Pure white background. The photo is a half-body shot taken with an EOS R EF 85mm lens using a photographic style and dark vignette effect--ar 16:9--seed 128 --v 5 --s 50
	A smiling 35 years old female political figure with small eyes, big lips, small nose, thin face from Taiwan. Pure white background. The photo is a half-body shot taken with an EOS R EF 85mm lens using a photographic style and dark vignette effect--ar 16:9 --v 5 --s 50

4.2 EDUCATION AND WORK EXPERIENCE

Cross-national studies often find that candidates with higher educational backgrounds are preferred by voters, as shown in research on Italian, Finnish, and Japanese voters (Franchino and Zucchini 2015; Coffé and Schoultz 2020; Horiuchi, Smith, and Yamamoto 2020). In East Asia, prestigious educational institutions, like the University of Tokyo, further enhance a candidate's appeal. Professional experience also plays a significant role in voter preferences. Studies across various countries, including the U.S., New Zealand, and the U.K., suggest that voters use candidates' professions as shortcuts to assess their capabilities, particularly in handling relevant issues (McDermot 2005; Coffé and Theiss-Morse 2016). However, in some cases, voters may prefer candidates with less prestigious or elite backgrounds, potentially as a reaction against elitism (Campbell and Cowley 2014; Carnes and Lupu 2016; Cutler 2002).

When designing candidate attributes for experiments, especially in Taiwan, it's essential to consider the high societal value placed on education, with a preference for foreign degrees. Taiwan's historical and cultural context also highlights the significance of professional backgrounds, such as legal and medical professions, which have been prominent among political figures. Despite the low trust in lawyers, legal backgrounds remain common among Taiwan's politicians. Similarly, doctors, who have maintained high societal trust since the Japanese colonial era, continue to be active in politics, as evidenced by the presence of doctors among candidates in Taiwan's 2024 presidential election.

4.3 POLITICAL PARTY

Since the 1960s, political party affiliation has been recognized as the most important attribute determining voter behavior, as it serves as a convenient shortcut for voters to simplify the decision-making process and reduce the time cost associated with voting (Campbell et al., 1960). Party identification is crucial for the stable operation of the party system, as empirical studies have shown that most voters tend to maintain their party identification in the long term, which is closely associated with their voting behavior. This phenomenon has also been verified in Taiwan (Chang, 2012; Sheng, 2010; Chen, 2000). As the gathering place for political elites, political parties also play a dominant role in shaping voter ideology and policy preferences (Wu and Hsu, 2003; Yang and Liu, 2006). Despite potential differences in ideology and policy preferences among Taiwanese voters compared to those in other countries, the role of political

parties in influencing voter choices can still be observed in practice.

Since democratization, the political structure of Taiwan has been roughly divided along the axis of the country's future orientation (unification or independence) and attitudes towards China. This division has resulted in the "pan-blue" led by the KMT and the "pan-green" led by the DPP, with the vast majority of Taiwanese parties falling into these categories. These two factions have long dominated Taiwan's political landscape and related issue framing (Sheng and Liao 2017; Tan and Ho 2017). However, as distrust in the traditional political environment has gradually increased, Taiwan, like other democratic countries, has also been swept up in the wave of populism in recent years. In response to those who are angry, frustrated, and resentful of traditional elite politics, opportunists have emerged (Judies 2016; Müller 2017). While it's entirely possible for traditional political forces to align with populist political figures, as seen with figures like Donald Trump, nominated by Republican Party twice, Taiwan's longstanding political party, the KMT, also nominated Han Kuo-yu(韓國瑜), who espoused slogans such as "people's politics" and "100% economy, 0% politics," as a presidential candidate. The "Han wave" caused a political storm in Taiwan during his candidacy, becoming a hot topic among Taiwanese people (Batto 2021; Hsu 2023). However, as a representative of a traditional political party, Han was still automatically categorized into the traditional pro-unification or pro-independence political spectrum.

In addition to Han, Ko Wen-je(柯文哲) is another typical populist politician. With no prior political experience, Ko served as the mayor of the capital city (Taipei) for eight years as a political outsider, and he remains popular to this day. His party, the TPP, which is totally formed around him, has also secured a certain number of seats in the past two parliamentary sessions. As a typical one-man-led party, Ko Wen-je doesn't need to carry the baggage of the old Party ideological framework like Han; he can set his own agenda independently. While his stance on traditional Taiwanese political issues such as Taiwan's future orientation and its relationship with China has been inconsistent, by setting the party's focus on domestic affairs and ignoring these issues, such as Ko's slogan "Give the country back to you" during his 2024 presidential campaign, TPP successfully attracted support primarily from young people and established a foothold in the past two parliamentary sessions. Ko Wen-je, as the leader of his party, also achieved the highest third-place vote share in history in the 2024 presidential election, with 26.46%.

Considering the TPP's distinct approach to issue framing compared to traditional Taiwanese politics and its populist, anti-establishment, anti-elite nature, its supporters have even emerged as a rare case in Taiwan where the unification/independence issue cannot be used as an analytical reason (Huang 2020). The impact of this party label on voter preferences relative to the preferences for the two traditional major parties is also worth exploring. In consideration of Taiwan's recent political structure characterized by the two major parties and one minor party, this study categorizes party affiliation into four types: KMT, DPP, TPP, and Nonpartisan. Additionally, given Taiwan's single-member district system where parties do not nominate candidates in the same district, the experimental design excludes situations where candidates from the same party are nominated in the same electoral district in a paired conjoint survey experiment (election pamphlets). On major political issues, each major party naturally holds corresponding positions. However, in the case of randomly assigned experiments, it's possible to have combinations of party-policy pairs that differ from voters' impressions of that party's stance. Therefore, this study also considers a candidate's party as an important attribute that may interact with the following four policy positions.

4.4 POLICY: RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA

In electoral studies, voter evaluations of candidates are influenced by the candidates' positions on issues. This perspective is evident in both the Michigan and rational choice schools of thought. As noted by Downs (1957), when a candidate's policy stance aligns closely with that of the voter, the voter is more likely to vote accordingly. The spatial voting theory, extended by Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989), suggests that voters cast their ballots based on the strength and direction of a candidate's support for specific issues. Additionally, the saliency theory proposed by Budge, Robertson, and Hearl (1987) explains how candidates selectively highlight issues where they have an advantage while concealing issues that do not align with voter preferences. Considering that in Taiwan, candidates themselves write the policy section of election brochures, this emphasizes Budge, Robertson, and Hearl's (1987) theory. When candidates choose to include relevant policies in their election brochures, it signifies that they believe these issues are more important for attracting voter preferences.

As previously mentioned, one of the most significant political divides in Taiwan stems from how to manage relations with China. In the current Taiwanese political landscape, the former authoritarian party, KMT (traditionally supported by the 「藍營」"Pan-Blue coalition"),

advocates for increased economic exchanges with China. On the other hand, the DPP, a party that has previously endorsed Taiwan independence (supported by the 「綠營」 "Pan-Green coalition"), adopts a more defensive stance towards China. Additionally, there is the relatively smaller TPP, which advocates for a more neutral approach to the China issue. Considering the narratives of these three parties, this study sets the three options for this policy stance as follows: Safeguarding sovereignty, Expanding exchanges, and Setting aside disputes.

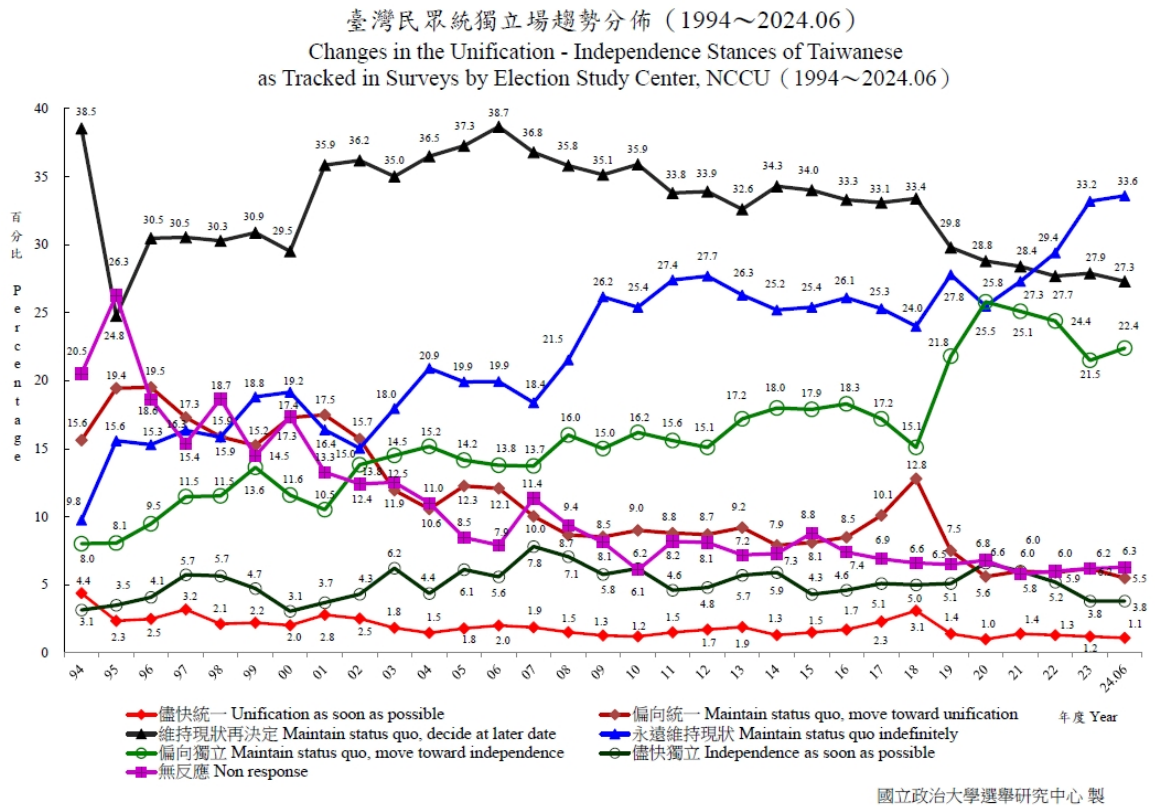
Taiwanese voters are likely to prefer a relatively moderate cross-strait discourse, aiming to reduce the possibility of conflict. This inference is based on the distribution of Taiwan's public opinion regarding independence and unification, as depicted in Figure 2 released by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University. Despite a significant portion of voters leaning towards independence over unification in the long term, the mainstream opinion in Taiwan has consistently leaned towards maintaining the status quo (interestingly, there is no consensus among Taiwanese voters regarding the specific status quo). Furthermore, findings from the Taiwan National Security Studies conducted by Professor Emerson Niou at Duke University indicate that by the end of 2022, Taiwanese people perceive cross-strait relations to have become more hostile compared to early 2020. Moreover, two-thirds of Taiwanese people still distrust Taiwan's ability to independently handle aggressive actions from China (Niou 2020; 2022). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that, overall, Taiwanese people would prefer relatively moderate cross-strait discourses, aiming to reduce conflict, leading to the hypothesis H2:

H2: Voters prefer a more moderate cross-strait policy stance over confrontational or shelving stances.

Considering that this is the most significant political divide in Taiwan, this study posits that supporters of different political parties will have markedly different attitudes towards these policy stances. Therefore, we propose hypothesis H2A:

H2A: Supporters of the Pan-Blue coalition prefer a moderate cross-strait policy stance; supporters of the Pan-Green coalition prefer a confrontational cross-strait policy stance; supporters of the TPP prefer a shelving cross-strait policy stance.

FIGURE 2. Changes in the Unification-Independence Stances of Taiwanese (1994~2024.6)



4.5 POLICY: DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND WELFARE DEVELOPMENT

The second part of the policy attributes focuses on domestic affairs and welfare. Considering that Taiwan lacks a clear left-right divide and generally leans towards government intervention in public infrastructure and social services, the difference lies mainly in the prioritization of these aspects (Hsiao, Cheng, and Achen, 2017; Hsiao and Cheng, 2014). This study incorporates "Priority Infrastructure" and "Priority Welfare" into the policy options. Additionally, due to the increasing discussion on government fiscal discipline in recent years in Taiwan, terms like "leaving debts for future generations" and "reckless spending" have become political rhetoric used to attack opponents. The emerging TPP often utilizes this rhetoric for political propaganda as well. This study believes that for some voters, fiscal discipline may be more important compared to infrastructure or welfare. Therefore, "Reducing unnecessary spending" is also included as a policy option in the same category, making a total of three policy categories.

During the era of authoritarian rule, Taiwan, as a typical developing country in East Asia,

like several neighboring countries, pursued industrialization led by the state. Through policy coordination, the majority of capital was invested in the most promising industrial sectors, reflecting a policy goal focused on development as the top priority. However, with the transition to democracy, social goals beyond development, such as social equality and environmental protection, gradually gained attention from the public. Nonetheless, due to party polarization resulting from democratic competition, societal issues have, to some extent, become polarized along party lines (Sheng & Liao, 2017; Chu, 2011).

This can be specifically seen in the two parties' eagerness to outdo each other on certain social welfare issues and their differential treatment of certain social welfare policies (Pork barrel). For example, regarding the issue of subsidies for elderly farmers, within less than two months of the 11th session of the parliament (2024-2028) commencing, lawmakers from both the ruling and opposition parties had already proposed at least six amended versions of the subsidy laws. However, on the issue of military and civil servant pension reform, the KMT, which relies on military and civil servant votes, explicitly opposed the DPP proposal to gradually reduce the replacement rate of pension income, which was initially proposed during the 9th session of the parliament (2016-2020) by the DPP. Moreover, upon gaining a relative majority in the 11th session of the parliament, the KMT promptly proposed to review the pension reform policy. This demonstrates that nowadays in Taiwan, debates on social issues such as domestic affairs and welfare are more about party and ethnic disputes rather than a contest of left/right values.

However, considering Taiwan's developmentalist tradition, there are still people who have benefited from the economic fruits during the era when development was prioritized. Moreover, economic development remains an important issue to this day. For instance, according to the TEDS survey data, economic development was considered the most important issue in 2016, and in 2020, it ranked second only to cross-strait relations, indicating that for Taiwanese voters, development-oriented policy proposals related to promoting economic development take precedence in the domestic affairs and welfare domain (Huang, 2016; 2020). Building upon this observation, this study further proposes hypotheses H3 and H3A:

H3: Voters prefer policy proposals related to development and construction over welfare or austerity measures.

H3A: Supporters of the Pan-Blue coalition prefer development-oriented policy proposals; supporters of the Pan-Green coalition prefer welfare-oriented policy proposals; supporters of the TPP prefer austerity-oriented policy proposals.

Taking into account people's perceived social status and their perception of their own position in society, individuals who consider themselves to be in higher social strata may anticipate being asked to shoulder additional obligations. Conversely, those who perceive themselves to be in a weaker position may hope for opportunities to receive external assistance to improve their circumstances. We hypothesize that since humans are rational beings, when individuals believe they are more likely to bear the burden of national taxes without necessarily enjoying corresponding welfare benefits, they should be less inclined to prefer policies that expand social welfare. Conversely, if individuals feel they are more likely to enjoy the benefits of national social welfare without needing to bear additional burdens, they should be more likely to support the expansion of the social welfare system. Building upon this, we propose an additional extended hypothesis, H3B:

H3B: Individuals with lower social status prefer welfare-oriented policy proposals, while those with higher social status prefer austerity-oriented policy proposals.

4.6 POLICY: MIGRANT WORKERS

In Taiwan, as economic growth and industrial transformation have led to labor shortages, the government, like other developed countries, has opted to import foreign workers to fill the labor gap. In past electoral studies in Taiwan, economic development has been a key value issue, and as such, all political parties have advocated for the introduction of migrant workers to alleviate labor shortages. For instance, in the 2024 presidential election, all three presidential candidates made similar statements. Although Taiwan has not yet seen political parties explicitly advocating against immigration or foreign labor, there remains a fear of migrant workers displacing local labor, which has occasionally led to conflicts. For example, in 2023, when the government signed a memorandum with India to import labor, Taipei saw small-scale protests against the move.

Although the decision to import foreign workers enjoys widespread support within Taiwan's business community, ordinary Taiwanese citizens, while generally pursuing economic development, still harbor a broad aversion to migrant workers. However, considering the fears of certain ethnic groups regarding this policy, this study extends to hypotheses H5 and H5A:

H4: Voters prefer a relaxation of restrictions on foreign migrant workers relative to regulated migrant workers.

H4A: Individuals with lower social status prefer regulated migrant workers, while those with higher social status prefer open migrant worker policies.

4.7 POLICY: Gender

The significant utility of conjoint survey experiments in studying policy preferences lies not only in elucidating the preference patterns of voters regarding specific political stances but also in identifying political issues that are not currently hotly debated but could significantly influence voter preferences. For instance, in Hanretty, Lauderdale, and Vivyan's (2020) conjoint survey experiments with British respondents, they found that while some issues at the forefront of current political debates in the UK still remain crucial for voters' choices (such as the second-ranked issue of relations with the EU or the third-ranked issue of renewable energy), certain less-discussed topics remarkably impact voters' choices (such as the top-ranked issue of the death penalty or the fifth-ranked issue of marijuana regulation, far surpassing the sixth-ranked issue of health insurance and the last-ranked issue of international trade policy). This indicates that, compared to the economic domain where disputes between left and right primarily occur over issues like taxation, candidates' stances on certain freedom/conservative issues not currently in the limelight of British politics are more likely to influence respondents' preferences for candidates.

In Taiwan, freedom/conservative issues are not mainstream political topics most of the time, except for the significant attention they received during the 2018 and 2020 elections, following Taiwan becoming the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage in 2019. These issues have not been at the forefront of political discourse for the most part. However, does this imply that these issues are unimportant to voters? This paper seeks to explore this question using the issue of sex work as a case study.

In Taiwan, there was once some legally operating sex industries, but it was eventually banned due to its involvement in illegal activities such as human trafficking, largely due to the efforts of women's groups. Despite efforts to address the proliferation of illegal sex industries, Taiwan had amended laws to allow local governments to establish red-light districts. However, no relevant enforcement regulations were established, and local governments have never set up such districts due to concerns from NIMBY facilities' issues. The discrepancy between illegal sex industries and official enforcement standards often results in marginalized populations bearing the brunt of crackdowns on the sex industry, while those of higher socioeconomic status are relatively less affected due to potential loopholes, such as the sugar daddy system.

Although the general public in Taiwan tends to support the establishment of legal red-light districts (Ministry of the Interior, 2010), discussions about sex and related issues are highly sensitive in public settings, particularly in relatively conservative East Asian societies. As a result, major political parties have never clearly stated their positions on these matters, fearing potential backlash from opponents. But does this mean that Taiwanese voters genuinely do not favor this policy? To address this question, this paper proposes hypotheses H5, H5A, and H5B.

H5: Voters prefer candidates who do not mention policies related to sex work.

H5A: Individuals with lower social status tend to prefer explicitly open policies on sex work.

H5B: Compared to females, males are more inclined to support explicitly open policies on sex work.

5. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

Following the determination of the number of attributes for the conjoint survey experiment, this paper proceeds to design the remaining experimental details. While allocating more tasks to respondents for selection can increase the effective observation count of the experiment, thereby getting closer to real-life scenarios, it is essential to consider respondents' reading endurance to avoid invalid responses due to decreased attention. Although Bansak et al. (2018) found in their hypothetical U.S. presidential election experiment that even with 30

sets of conjoint survey experiments, the accuracy of the experiment was not significantly affected, this paper still chooses to provide respondents with only five sets of tasks to prevent the accuracy of the experiment results from being compromised due to exceeding the limits of respondents' attention span.

As for the sample size required for the experiment, this paper relies on a priori power analysis to determine it. Stefanelli and Lukac (2020), referencing Cohen (1988) who advocates for a statistical power of over 0.8, developed an estimation tool for calculating the a priori power of conjoint survey experiments. This tool comprises the maximum number of categories for a single attribute (k), the number of tasks (t), the effect size (δ), and the sample size (n). With this experiment designed with 8 attribute groups and 5 tasks, setting the effect size to 0.05 as demonstrated in Stefanelli and Lukac (2020), it is necessary to successfully survey at least 1000 respondents to achieve the statistical power of no less than 0.8 recommended by Cohen (1988). Therefore, this paper sets the minimum sample size for the survey at 1000. Since each respondent will undertake five sets of conjoint analysis tasks, there will be at least 10,000 total observations available for analysis. Considering the aforementioned experimental design (effect size $\delta=0.05$, sample size $n\geq 1000$, number of tasks $t=5$, maximum categories for a single attribute $k=6$), the priori power of this conjoint survey experiment is calculated to be 0.88.

The experiment described in this paper was commissioned to be conducted by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University in May 2023. The Election Study Center is a prominent academic institution for electoral research in Taiwan, known for its reputable academic standing and regular publication of trend data on Taiwanese political attitudes. Despite the constraints of the conjoint survey experiment, which utilized online surveys, the respondent database was sourced from volunteers in the telephone survey sample conducted by the Election Study Center through random sampling procedures. This ensures a representative sample compared to a fully voluntary sample. As for differences in demographic characteristics and political attitudes between the survey sample and the population, these will be summarized in Appendix.

6. RESULT

To verify that the survey experiment data adheres to the principles of random assignment, a chi-square test of independence was performed on the demographic variables of the

respondents and the random assignment factors within this experiment. The results can be found in Appendix. Overall, the random assignment factors align with the distribution probabilities planned for the experiment, except for a potential significant correlation between domestic livelihood policy and the age of the participants ($p=0.037$). This suggests that the random assignment factors in this experiment generally conform to the expected outcomes of random assignment. To address the internal validity concerns of the experiment, such as the no carryover effect and no profile order effect discussed by Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014), and the no fatigue effect highlighted by Banask et al. (2018), this study employs the conditional randomization test (CRT).

Ham, Imai, and Janson (2024) assert that the conditional randomization test enables us to observe whether the factor X of interest alters the original causal effect Y while keeping other factors Z constant. This approach offers several advantages: it generates precise p -values without multiple iterative approximations, is applicable to various statistical test metrics, and effectively controls Type I error, thus ensuring result credibility. By employing bootstrapping and performing 2000 repeated calculations to ensure test consistency, the results indicate that we cannot reject the null hypotheses for the no carryover effect ($p=0.432$), no profile order effect ($p=0.438$), and no fatigue effect ($p=0.989$). This confirms that the experiment's data meet the three basic assumptions.

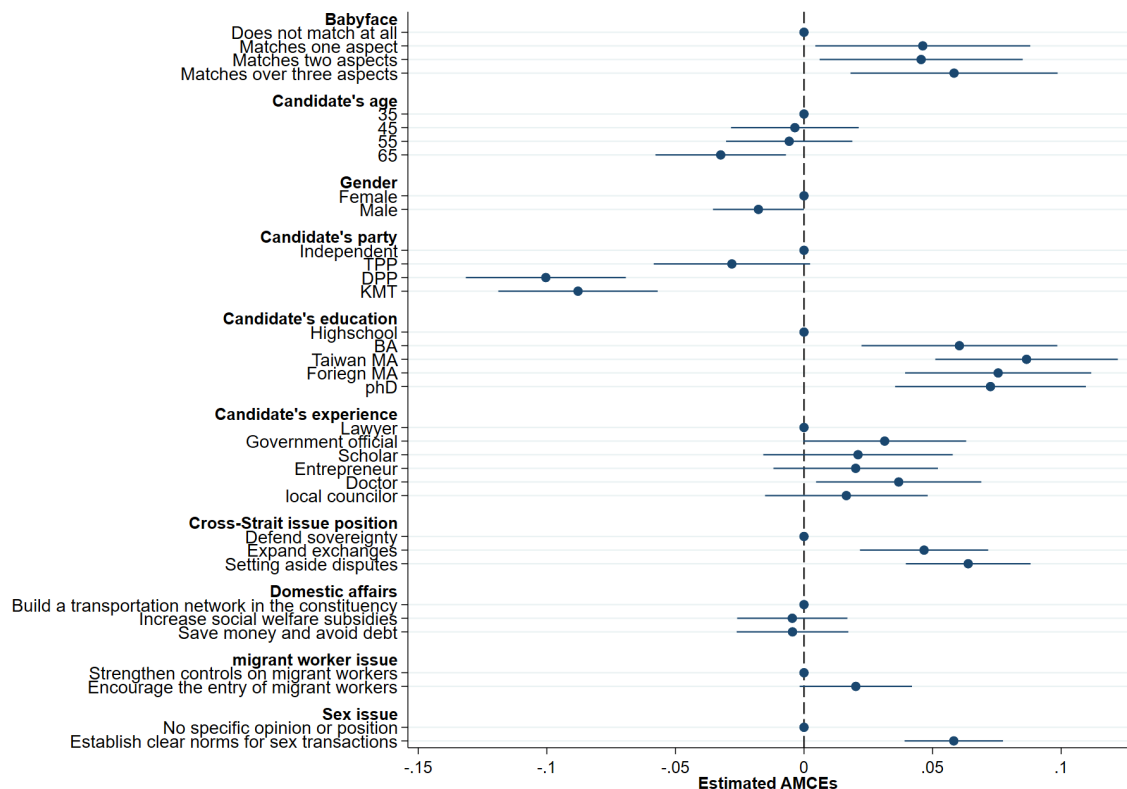
This paper employs two main tools for analyzing causal effects. For the primary model analysis, we draw on the work of Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto (2014), who introduced the application of conjoint survey experiments in political science, estimating the causal effects of each attribute category using the average marginal component effect (AMCE). Researchers use one category of each randomly assigned attribute as a reference point, comparing respondents' preference differences in other characteristics relative to this reference. The key benefit of using the average marginal component effect is that it enables researchers to make clear and concise empirical statements.

To prevent potential interaction effects between attributes, this study employs the average marginal interaction effect (AMIE) analysis method before the formal analysis. AMIE helps decompose the overall causal effect of any stimulus into its main and interaction effects, allowing researchers to estimate interaction effects in high-dimensional structures (Egami and Imai 2019). This conjoint survey experiment examines attributes like candidates' age, gender,

party affiliation, and specific policies, ensuring that the former attributes do not significantly influence the causal relationship with policy preferences. The results, detailed in the Appendix, reveal almost no significant interactions between attributes. This finding allows the study to focus on the main effects of the attributes of interest on respondents' preferences.

Figure 3 presents the results of the AMCE analysis. It shows that for the candidate's appearance, using candidates who do not exhibit any of the four baby-face characteristics as the reference point, this study finds that the more a hypothetical legislative candidate's appearance matches the baby-face indicators, the more significantly respondents prefer them. Specifically, when candidates fully meet the baby-face criteria set in this study, the coefficient reaches its highest value, confirming Hypothesis H1: voters prefer candidates who exhibit baby-face characteristics.

FIGURE 3. Overall Preferences of Respondents Towards Legislative Candidates



This result indeed reflects the current political landscape in Taiwan. Candidates with a appearance advantage do not hesitate to leverage their appearance to garner votes, such as

campaigning in maid costumes, or posing for swimsuit promotional photos. The media also readily labels such candidates with titles like "LGBT's total package " (同志天菜), "fresh-faced beauty" (清新正妹), or "Sunflower Movement heartthrob" (太陽花帥哥), indirectly fostering this trend. Conversely, candidates who are less privileged in this aspect often resort to extreme image editing, to the extent that even voters mockingly comment they cannot recognize them. However, the political phenomenon of praising candidates based on their appearance also leads people to overlook or underestimate other aspects of the candidates. This prevents them from objectively assessing their actions and even leads to derogatory terms like "trophy candidate," highlighting the need for improvement in the democratic literacy and gender awareness of the Taiwanese public.

Turning to policy preferences, this paper begins by discussing two cross-strait issues involving diplomacy and national sovereignty. Setting the more radical and confrontational stance of "defending sovereignty" as the reference category, the paper observes the attractiveness of hypothetical legislative candidates advocating for the relatively moderate positions of "expanding exchanges" and "setting aside disputes" to respondents. The experimental results indicate that respondents significantly do not prefer cross-strait policy proposals with confrontational implications. However, compared to the moderate proposal of increasing exchanges, respondents show a greater preference for candidates advocating for directly setting aside cross-strait issues. Therefore, hypothesis H1, "Voters prefer a more moderate cross-strait policy stance over confrontational or shelving stances." receives only partial validation. Such results may also be related to the external environmental changes Taiwan has faced in recent years.

In recent years, China has taken a more aggressive stance toward Taiwan, deploying a large number of short-range missiles in coastal provinces and further developing its Area Denial capabilities to thwart potential US military intervention (Lewis, La Boon, and Eveleth 2020; Maizland 2020). Since 2016, China's navy and air force have increasingly harassed Taiwan's surrounding sea and airspace. Following then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022, the Chinese Communist Party conducted large-scale military exercises, including missile flights over Taiwan, aiming to use military intimidation for political propaganda (Hong Zijie 2020). Confronted with China's clearer military threats and international events such as the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Taiwanese public's attitude toward cross-strait issues has become more

conservative. Compared to 2020, in 2022, Taiwanese citizens were more pessimistic about their military's self-defense capabilities, more cautious about the possibility of US intervention in the Taiwan Strait, and more likely to believe that China might wage war against Taiwan (Niou 2020; 2022; Chen Luhui 2022). This shift in sentiment is also reflected in the experimental results, where respondents showed less preference for the confrontational "defending sovereignty" policy positions.

In recent years, China's economic performance has suffered due to the US-China confrontation, slowing economic growth, and COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Consequently, it has become harder for Taiwanese people to see increased economic and cultural exchanges with China as beneficial for Taiwan, and they are more cautious about China's strategy of using commerce to exert political pressure (Niou 2022). Additionally, China's human rights and rule of law issues have come under increased scrutiny. Since 2019, Hong Kong's extradition law revisions to include mainland China sparked large-scale protests due to widespread distrust of the mainland's judicial system. China's use of military repression to handle Hong Kong's democratic protests has further undermined confidence in the "one country, two systems" policy. According to longitudinal surveys by Wang and Huang (2023) on Taiwanese people, in the face of China's military threats and repression in Hong Kong, identification with China has not increased among Taiwanese. Instead, it has strengthened their identification as Taiwanese. This suggests that while Taiwanese people may wish to reduce confrontation to avoid provoking China, it does not mean they desire more exchanges with China.

Also in the past, there have been advocates for setting aside sovereignty disputes regarding cross-strait and national defense issues. However, the discourse of setting aside disputes often becomes intertwined with the promotion of various cross-strait exchanges, becoming part of a rhetoric. On the other hand, concerning the issue of unification or independence, many people in the past advocated for setting aside the unification-independence dispute, choosing to defer resolution until later due to the perceived inability to resolve the issue at the time. However, as cross-strait tensions seem to have reached an irreversible impasse, some Taiwanese may have developed different views on this political divide. People neither trust China nor wish for the government to adopt a stronger stance that could provoke China and threaten Taiwan's security. In this situation where there are no clear answers, setting aside the issue might be the best approach for some people. Referring to Figure 2, it is evident that the proportion of people inclined towards "Maintain the status quo and decide independence or unification later" is

increasing annually. This confirms that for many Taiwanese, rather than focusing on the unification-independence issue, they prefer to believe or hope that the status quo can be maintained indefinitely and would rather prioritize other matters. The article contends that this is precisely why people prefer candidates who directly choose to set aside cross-strait policies.

We continue by analyzing the hypothetical legislative candidate's domestic policy proposals and their influence on voter preferences. Using the development-oriented policy proposal of "Build a transportation network in the constituency" as a reference point, the study examines whether candidates advocating for this proposal are more favored by voters compared to candidates advocating for two other types of proposals: "Increase social welfare subsidies" and "Save money and avoid debt." The results indicate that while the coefficients for the latter two types of proposals are indeed negative compared to the reference point, there is no significant difference. Therefore, the hypothesis H3, which posits that voters prefer candidates advocating for construction-oriented policies over welfare-oriented or austerity-oriented policies, cannot be validated.

Such results may indeed reflect the general attitude of Taiwanese people, who desire everything: they want the government to expand infrastructure, take care of the underprivileged, yet also hope for fiscal restraint, preferring the government to avoid debt whenever possible. This attitude may also reflect the similarity in the main content of domestic policies among political parties, with differences primarily lying in individual decision-making or implementation methods. The homogeneity of parties in this regard may reflect Downs' (1957) observation that, in order to secure votes, political parties tend to converge on most policy dimensions.

In examining the impact of policy proposals regarding foreign migrant workers on voter preferences, the study uses "Strengthen controls on migrant workers" as a reference point to observe its effect on voter preferences. The experimental results indicate that compared to "Encourage the entry of migrant workers", the policy proposal of "Encourage the entry of migrant workers" exhibits a higher coefficient but lacks significant differences. This suggests that overall, there is no consistent opinion among respondents regarding the introduction of foreign migrant workers, thus failing to validate hypothesis H4, which posits that voters prefer relaxing regulations on foreign migrant workers relative to strict regulation.

While various political figures and parties advocating for the opening of migrant labor may cater to the industrial and commercial sectors they perceive as needing more focus, it does not necessarily reflect a consensus within society. This outcome also reflects the diversity of opinions among voters on this issue. Although currently, the issue of foreign migrant workers may not be a primary concern for Taiwanese voters when choosing candidates, as the number of foreign migrant workers continues to increase, attitudes toward foreign migrant worker policies may become an important issue of contention between political parties in the visible future, even potentially serving as a source of societal division. Hence, it is worth researchers' continued attention.

Our study then analyzes the impact of hypothetical legislative candidates' stances on sex work policies on participant preferences, using "No specific opinion or position" as a reference point. The analysis reveals that participants significantly prefer candidates advocating for "Establish clear norms for sex transactions" contrary to the initial hypothesis H5, which posited that voters prefer candidates who do not mention sex work policies. Although issues related to sexuality are not currently mainstream debating points in the political arena, according to this study's findings, voters do indeed prefer candidates who take a clear stance on regulating sex work. This finding aligns with observations by Hanretty, Lauderdale, and Vivyan (2020) in the UK, suggesting that, besides the policy issues that genuinely influence voter choices, such as current political focal points like national defense, diplomacy, or the economy, debates over values in the realm of liberal/conservative ideologies also wield considerable influence over voters.

In the 2024 Taiwan national election, there was no observed emphasis on debates over liberal/conservative values as focal points for voter concern. However, during the 2018 local elections, the issue of same-sex marriage was one of the primary policy debate topics, extending even to the 2020 national election, where some grassroots organizations and political figures opposing same-sex marriage utilized it as a means to attack their opponents. On the other hand, according to survey data from the TEDS, it was found that one of the most dissatisfactory issues for voters during President Tsai Ing-wen's tenure from 2016 to 2020 was "same-sex marriage." This indicates that debates over liberal/conservative values are not impossible to become crucial issues for voter choices in Taiwan (Huang, 2020).

In terms of other attributes, firstly, regarding gender, it can be observed that participants

are less inclined towards male candidates compared to female candidates. Although the number of female politicians in Taiwan, like in other East Asian countries, is relatively low, this does not necessarily translate to a disadvantage in elected public positions. In the past two sessions of the Taiwanese Legislative Yuan, the proportion of female legislators has been at 42%, indicating that female participation in elected public positions may not necessarily be a hindrance. Concerning candidate age, participants significantly prefer candidates who are younger (35 years old) compared to the oldest candidates (65 years old). This suggests that voters are not necessarily inclined towards younger candidates but rather are unwilling to choose candidates who appear elderly. Hence, it is common for candidates to present visually younger images in their campaign advertisements.

In terms of party affiliation, the study uses "Independent" as a reference point to analyze the impact of candidates' party affiliations on participant preferences. According to the results of the AMCE, it is found that participants significantly do not prefer candidates affiliated with the KMT or the DPP compared to independent candidates. The study posits that this is because for voters with negative party perceptions, they may prefer preventing a certain party from winning rather than strongly supporting a specific party. Additionally, for supporters of the KMT or DPP, negative party perceptions primarily affect the opposing party and significantly influence voting behavior (Lee and Chang, 2022).

Considering that nearly half of Taiwanese voters identify with either the KMT or the DPP, and past media surveys have indicated a higher level of aversion towards either the KMT or the DPP individually, it is natural that these factors would influence the results of this experiment. As for the TPP, although negative coefficients are observed in Figure 3, the actual results are not significant. This indicates that participants in this experiment do not exhibit preference differences between independent or TPP-affiliated legislative candidates.

Continuing with "High School Graduate" as the reference point, we analyze the impact of candidates' educational backgrounds on participant preferences. According to the results of the AMCE, the study finds that relative to a high school education, participants indeed prefer higher levels of education, but not to the extent initially imagined in the experimental design, where candidates with higher educational backgrounds are more favored by voters. While candidates with postgraduate education are indeed more favored than those with undergraduate education, the coefficient for "Domestic Master's Degree" is the highest among "Domestic

Master's Degree," "Foreign Master's Degree," and "Ph.D." Our study suggests two possible reasons for this. Firstly, to some extent, participants may care more about the hypothetical candidates' alma mater rather than their degree level. Secondly, given that Taiwan only began expanding higher education about 30 years ago, the average educational attainment of Taiwanese people over 50 is not as high as those under 50. Therefore, voters cannot solely rely on the educational background of hypothetical legislative candidates to determine their preference order based on the level of education.

Finally, we analyze the impact of hypothetical legislative candidates' work experience on voter preferences. During the experimental design phase, We considered work experiences commonly seen in Taiwan's political reality and set the options as "Entrepreneur," "Government Official," "Scholar," "Lawyer," "Doctor," and "Local Councilor". Since these six categories are all common work experiences among Taiwanese politicians, the study did not expect significant preference differences among participants if any individual category was used as a reference point. Nevertheless, the study still used "Lawyer" as the reference point and analyzed the other five categories to observe participants' relative preference order. The study not only found that participants had positive coefficients for the other work experience categories relative to "Lawyer," but participants even showed a significant preference for "Doctor." In Taiwan, there has always been a high degree of esteem for the medical profession in the past social and cultural contexts, to the extent that doctors are often among the most trusted individuals in society outside of family members (Feng, 2019). Therefore, it is not uncommon in Taiwan for doctors to enter politics, and even in the 2024 presidential election, two out of three presidential candidates were doctors. This indicates that the high level of social trust associated with the medical profession indeed has a significant influence on voter preferences.

In analyzing subgroup attitudes, Banask et al. (2020) suggested employing Conditional Average Marginal Component Effect (conditional AMCE) to estimate and assess the heterogeneity of AMCE among subgroups. Despite offering a convenient interpretation method, both average marginal effects and conditional average marginal effects still present some challenges.

The principle behind average marginal effects involves selecting a reference feature within each attribute and then computing the differences between other features and this reference. The choice of reference significantly impacts the numerical variations of average

marginal effects. Additionally, when comparing average marginal effects among subgroups, although conditional average marginal effects can estimate the causal relationship between attributes and voting choices based on the selected reference feature, the randomness of subgroup responses to experimental stimuli cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, it can only serve as conditional treatment effects under specific conditions. Consequently, we cannot infer that preference differences within subgroups are caused by subgroup differences themselves (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

When conditional average marginal effects can only serve to observe distribution trends rather than infer causality, Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2020) proposed using MM as the basis for subgroup analysis, setting 0.5 as the reference line instead of 0 as in AMCE. Conditional marginal means (conditional MM), unlike conditional average marginal effects affected by variations in the choice of reference values for each attribute, more directly depict differences in AMCE for various subgroups concerning each attribute and the respondent's choice. Moreover, by subtracting the estimated MM values of attribute features for different subgroups, we can examine whether the confidence interval of this difference includes 0, indicating whether subgroup differences significantly interact with the causality of AMCE. Consequently, this paper will employ conditional MMs to observe the distribution of attribute preferences among various subgroups and assess whether differences in conditional MMs among subgroups affect the causal relationship of the main model.

The study first categorizes respondents by party affiliation for subgroup analysis. Figure 4 provide marginal means for supporters of the Pan-Blue coalition, Pan-Green coalition, Taiwan People's Party, and those without party affiliation regarding candidate appearance, cross-strait policy views, and livelihood policy views (complete results can be found in the appendix). From Figure 4, it is observed that, except for supporters of the Pan-Green coalition, supporters of the other three groups show a preference for candidate appearance that increases with better appearance. However, upon examining the actual subtractive results in Figure 4, no significant differences were found after subtracting the marginal means of the four groups. Therefore, we cannot verify Hypothesis H1A: whether there is a causal effect of respondent preferences for candidate appearance and choice differing by party affiliation.

Next, we analyze differences in cross-strait policy views. Looking solely at the marginal means in Figure 4 indeed supports the inference of Hypothesis H2A in this study. Supporters

of the Pan-Blue coalition show the highest marginal means for "expanding exchanges," Pan-Green coalition supporters for "defending sovereignty," and Taiwan People's Party supporters for "setting aside disputes." Subsequently, this study subtracts the marginal means of supporters of the Pan-Blue coalition, Pan-Green coalition, and Taiwan People's Party from each other to examine whether there are significant differences in respondent preferences for cross-strait policy views based on party affiliation.

From the differences in marginal means in Figure 4, it is evident that there are significant differences between supporters of the Pan-Blue coalition and the Pan-Green coalition across all three categories of cross-strait policy views. Compared to Pan-Green coalition supporters, Pan-Blue coalition supporters significantly prefer "expanding exchanges" and "setting aside disputes" policies, while showing less preference for "defending sovereignty." As for supporters of the Taiwan People's Party, while they similarly prefer "expanding exchanges" and "setting aside disputes" policies compared to Pan-Green coalition supporters, their preference for "defending sovereignty" is significantly lower than that of Pan-Green coalition supporters.

But does this mean that supporters of the Taiwan People's Party generally align their preferences for cross-strait policy views with those of Pan-Blue coalition supporters? Continuing with the subtraction of marginal means between Taiwan People's Party supporters and Pan-Blue coalition supporters, this study finds that while there are no significant differences in "defending sovereignty" and "setting aside disputes" policies, Taiwan People's Party supporters significantly prefer "expanding exchanges" less compared to Pan-Blue coalition supporters, indicating a certain degree of preference difference between them. This suggests that Taiwan People's Party supporters fall between supporters of the two major party camps and maintain their uniqueness in preferences for cross-strait policy views. Combining the above points, this study can validate most of Hypothesis H2A: Pan-Blue coalition supporters prefer cross-strait policy views that expand exchanges; Pan-Green coalition supporters prefer cross-strait policy views that defend sovereignty; Taiwan People's Party supporters prefer cross-strait policy views that set aside disputes.

As for respondent preferences regarding livelihood policy views, whether they vary by party affiliation, this study also refers to Figure 4. It is observed that supporters of the Pan-Blue coalition have the highest marginal means for conservative nature policies, while supporters of the Pan-Green coalition and the Taiwan People's Party have the highest marginal means for

progressive nature policies. This does not align with the initial hypothesis H3A of this study: "Pan-Blue coalition supporters prefer conservative nature policy views; Pan-Green coalition supporters prefer welfare nature policy views; Taiwan People's Party supporters prefer progressive nature policy views."

Considering that Taiwan is currently under the governance of the Pan-Green camp's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), this study believes that the distribution of marginal means may partly reflect the imaginations of party supporters regarding political operations. Supporters of the ruling party, when choosing legislators, may prefer policy views that support government governance compared to supporters of other parties, and may also prefer to see national expenditures on infrastructure and social welfare. Conversely, they may prefer less government expenditure. However, can such factors truly influence differences in preferences for livelihood policy views? Further referencing the marginal mean differences provided in Table 2, this study finds that there are no significant differences in the marginal means of livelihood policy views after subtracting between the three groups, indicating that respondent preferences for livelihood policy views do not vary by party affiliation, thereby refuting hypothesis H3A.

FIGURE 4. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Legislative Candidates' Attributes Based on Party Affiliation

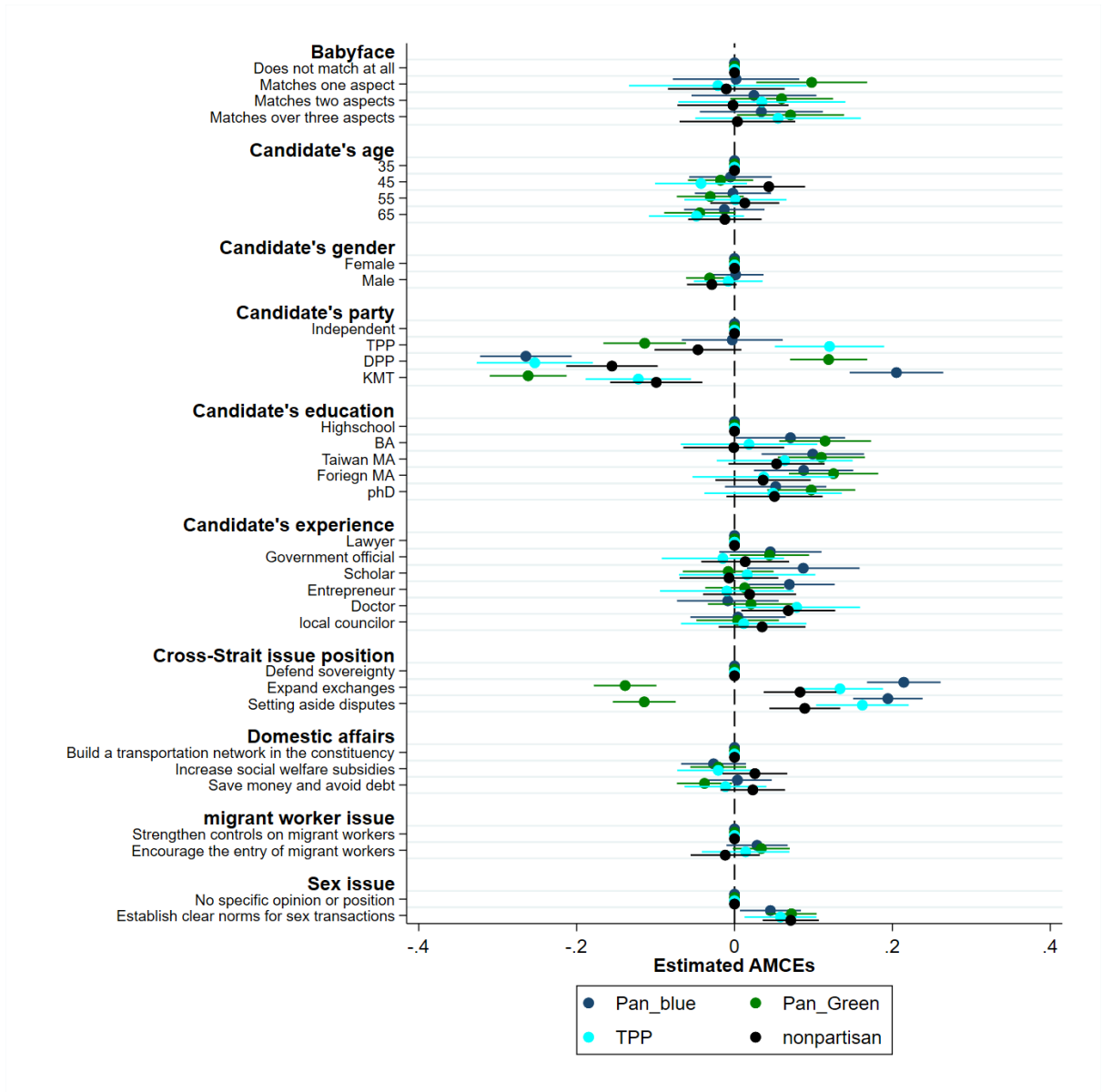


TABLE 2. Marginal Mean Differences in Candidate Policy Positions Based on Party Identification of Respondents.

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)		95% confidence interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Cross-Strait Policy				
Defending Sovereignty				
Pan-Green - Pan-Blue	0.2283***	(0.0188)	0.1915	0.2652
TPP - Pan-Green	-0.1853***	(0.0214)	-0.2273	-0.1434
TPP - Pan-Blue	0.0430	(0.0226)	-0.0013	0.0873
Expanding Exchanges				
Pan-Green - Pan-Blue	-0.1394***	(0.0188)	-0.1762	-0.1025
TPP - Pan-Green	0.0884***	(0.0202)	0.0488	0.1280
TPP - Pan-Blue	-0.0510*	(0.0221)	-0.0944	-0.0076
Shelving Disputes				
Pan-Green - Pan-Blue	-0.0873***	(0.0178)	-0.1222	-0.0523
TPP - Pan-Green	0.0932***	(0.0209)	0.0522	0.1341
TPP - Pan-Blue	0.0059	(0.0221)	-0.0375	0.0493
Livelihood Policy				
Construction-oriented				
Pan-Green - Pan-Blue	0.0106	(0.0169)	-0.0225	0.0437
TPP - Pan-Green	-0.0120	(0.0185)	-0.0482	0.0242
TPP - Pan-Blue	-0.0014	(0.0200)	-0.0406	0.0378
Welfare-oriented				
Pan-Green - Pan-Blue	0.0153	(0.0171)	-0.0183	0.0489
TPP - Pan-Green	-0.0076	(0.0203)	-0.0474	0.0323
TPP - Pan-Blue	0.0077	(0.0218)	-0.0351	0.0505
Austerity-oriented				
Pan-Green - Pan-Blue	-0.0280	(0.0186)	-0.0645	0.0084
TPP - Pan-Green	0.0205	(0.0207)	-0.0199	0.0610
TPP - Pan-Blue	-0.0075	(0.0228)	-0.0521	0.0371
Number of respondents			1200	
Total sample size			12000	

Noted: ***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.

Continuing the analysis, this study investigates how respondents' social status influences their preferences for hypothetical candidate policies. Considering the limited number of respondents who identified themselves as upper or lower class in the five-class social stratification used in this experiment, this study merged the upper-middle class with the upper class and the lower-middle class with the lower class after excluding respondents who answered "don't know." The social class was then reclassified into three categories for analysis. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics of respondents' self-perceived social class in the three-class classification, while Figure 5 presents the results of the conditional MMs analysis based on this subgroup classification for domestic welfare policies, labor policies, and gender policies.

TABLE 3. Distribution of Respondents' Self-Perceived Social Class

Social Class	Frequency	Percentage
Upper Level	200	16.98%
Middle Level	659	55.94%
Lower Level	319	27.08%
Total	1178	100.0 %

The article continues to analyze whether there are significant differences in policy preferences based on the social class of the respondents. According to the marginal means in Figure 5 (complete results can be found in the appendix), respondents who perceive themselves as upper-class do not prefer conservative nature policies, and lower-class respondents do not prefer welfare nature policies. This observation differs from the initial hypothesis H3B, which posited, "The lower the social class, the greater the preference for welfare nature policy views; the higher the social class, the greater the preference for conservative nature policy views." Additionally, referencing the marginal mean differences

provided in Table 4, the study found that middle-class respondents prefer welfare nature policy views more than upper-class respondents but detected no other differences in preferences for livelihood policy views. Therefore, this study cannot validate hypothesis H3B.

Regarding labor policy views, according to the marginal means in Figure 5, this observation aligns closely with the initial hypothesis H4A, which stated, "The lower the social class, the more likely individuals are to prefer regulating migrant workers; respondents of higher social classes are more likely to prefer relaxing restrictions on foreign workers." However, upon referencing the marginal mean differences in Table 4, the study did not find any significant differences, thus failing to validate hypothesis H4A.

FIGURE 5. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Attribute of Legislative Candidates Based on Social Class.

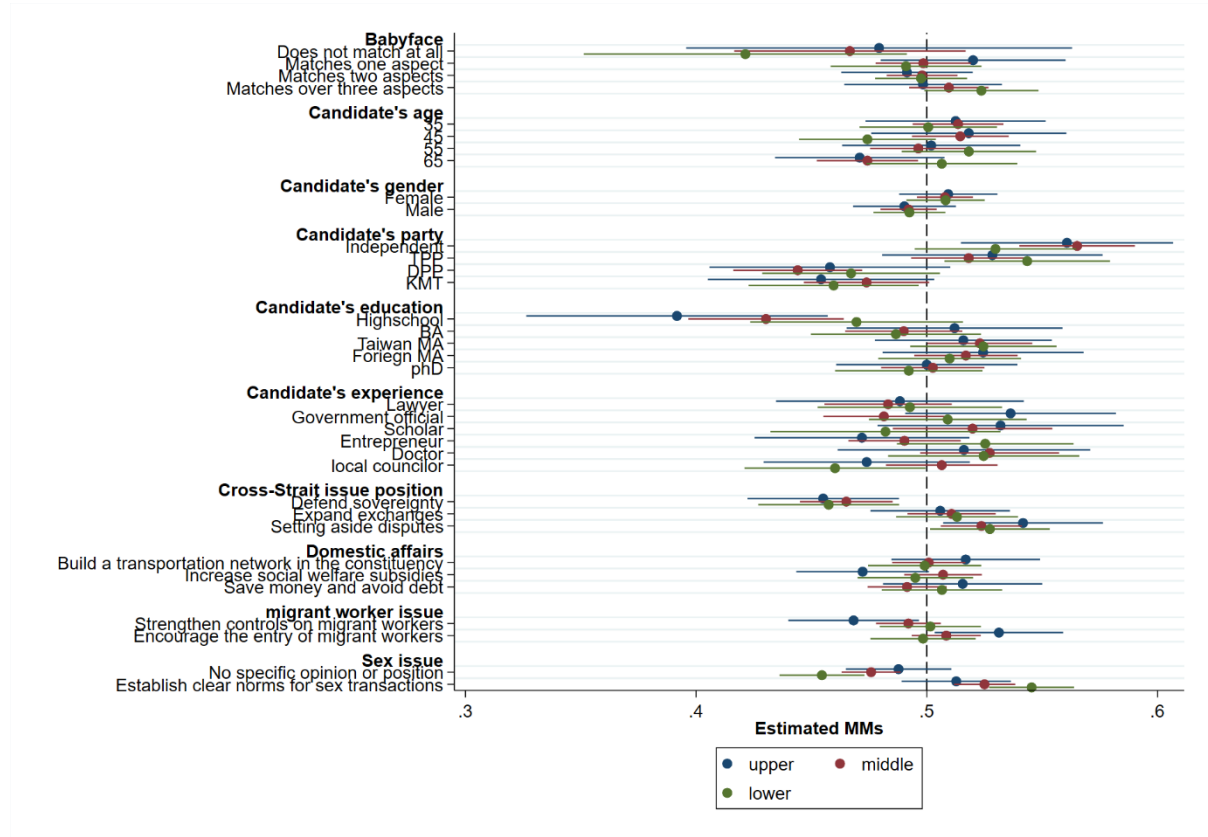


TABLE 4. Marginal Mean Differences in Candidate Policy Positions Based on Social Class of Respondents

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)		95% confidence interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Livelihood Policy				
Construction-oriented				
Upper - Middle Class	0.0160	(0.0182)	-0.0197	0.0517
Middle - Lower Class	0.0018	(0.0149)	-0.0273	0.0309
Upper - Lower Class	0.0178	(0.0205)	-0.0225	0.0580
Welfare-oriented				
Upper - Middle Class	-0.1394*	(0.0188)	-0.0680	-0.0018
Middle - Lower Class	0.0120	(0.0153)	-0.0181	0.0421
Upper - Lower Class	-0.0229	(0.0194)	-0.0608	0.0151
Austerity-oriented				
Upper - Middle Class	-0.0873	(0.0178)	-0.0142	0.0624
Middle - Lower Class	-0.0151	(0.0159)	-0.0462	0.0160
Upper - Lower Class	0.0090	(0.0220)	-0.0341	0.0520
Labor Policy				
Strengthen Regulations				
Upper - Middle Class	-0.0238	(0.0161)	-0.0552	0.0077
Middle - Lower Class	-0.0095	(0.0132)	-0.0355	0.0165
Upper - Lower Class	-0.0333	(0.0182)	-0.0689	0.0024
Encourage Entry				
Upper - Middle Class	0.0228	(0.0160)	-0.0086	0.0543
Middle - Lower Class	0.0101	(0.0139)	-0.0171	0.0372
Upper - Lower Class	0.0329	(0.0183)	-0.0029	0.0687
Sex issue				
No Specific Policy Stance				
Upper - Middle Class	0.0119	(0.0133)	-0.0142	0.0380
Middle - Lower Class	0.0213	(0.0114)	-0.0010	0.0437
Upper - Lower Class	0.0332*	(0.0149)	0.0040	0.0624
Establish Regulations				
Upper - Middle Class	-0.0123	(0.0138)	-0.0393	0.0148
Middle - Lower Class	-0.0204	(0.0115)	-0.0430	0.0022
Upper - Lower Class	-0.0327*	(0.0152)	-0.0625	-0.0028
Number of respondents			1178	
Total sample size			11780	

Noted: ***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.

The study notes that respondents' preferences for livelihood and labor policy views do not vary by social class. This is attributed to the method used to determine social class in this data, which is based directly on respondents' self-assessment rather than the more common academic or governmental approaches that define social class based on economic factors (such as household income) or cultural capital (such as parental educational background). The hypothesis was based on the principle of rational self-interest, with respondents' preferences determined by potential economic benefits. However, the experimentally defined social class may not effectively identify the groups that are predisposed to prefer certain policies due to economic factors, thus leading to non-significant differences.

Finally, in terms of gender policy views, looking solely at the marginal means in Figure 5, there is a trend where the lower the social class of the respondents, the higher their preference for establishing clear regulations on sex trade, aligning with the initial hypothesis H5A that "lower social classes prefer policies that explicitly open up sex trade." While the actual comparison using the marginal mean differences in Table 4 shows significant differences only between upper and lower class respondents, the distribution pattern of marginal means among subgroups confirms that preferences for gender policy views indeed vary significantly by social class, thus validating the results of hypothesis H5A.

The study analyzes potential differences arising from the gender of respondents. Figure 6 provide the conditional marginal means for differences in respondent gender (complete results can be found in the appendix), focusing on candidate appearance and gender policy views. According to the marginal means in Figure 6, while both men and women tend to prefer candidates with baby-face features, no significant effect was observed. Furthermore, referring to Table 5, after subtracting the conditional marginal means between female and male respondents, it was noted that female respondents showed a greater preference for

candidates with at least two baby-face features. However, there were no significant differences when the candidates met three or more criteria of a baby-face appearance. Therefore, we were unable to validate Hypothesis H1B that male respondents prefer baby-faced candidates more than female respondents.

FIGURE 6. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Attribute of Legislative Candidates Based on Gender

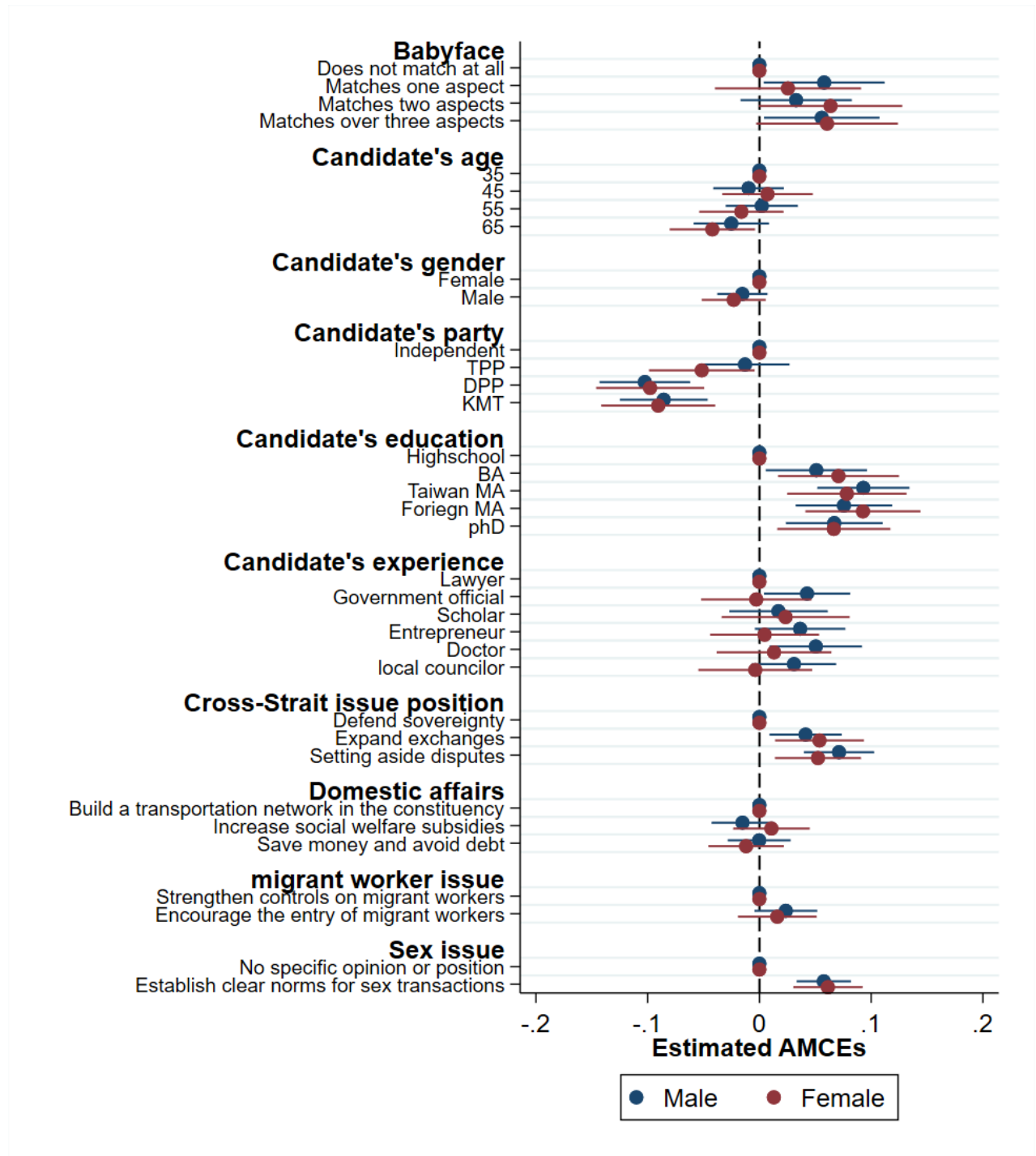


TABLE 5. Marginal Mean Differences in Candidate Policy Positions Based on Gender of Respondents

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)	95% confidence interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Babyface			
0 match			
Female - Male	-0.0095 (0.0377)	-0.0833	0.0643
1 match			
Female - Male	-0.0356* (0.0164)	-0.0678	-0.0034
2 matches			
Female - Male	0.0236* (0.0118)	0.0004	0.0469
3/4 matches			
Female - Male	0.0020 (0.0135)	-0.0246	0.0285
Sex issue			
No Specific Policy Stance			
Female - Male	-0.0017 (0.0100)	-0.0212	0.0176
Establish Regulations			
Female - Male	0.0017 (0.0102)	-0.0182	0.0217
Number of respondents		1200	
Total sample size		12000	

Noted: *: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.**

Regarding gender policy, according to the marginal means in Figure 6, female respondents showed a stronger preference for establishing clear regulations on sex trade compared to male respondents. This finding does not align with the initial hypothesis H5B, which suggested that "compared to females, males prefer more explicitly open policies on sex trade." Further examination of the marginal mean differences in Table 5 also did not reveal any significant differences, thereby completely refuting Hypothesis H5B.

Through the analyses presented, this study posits that policies explicitly opening up sex trade are relatively favored in society and do not lead to conflicts in policy preferences due to social class or gender differences. This finding also corresponds with the results of previous

surveys conducted by the Taiwanese government regarding attitudes towards designated sex trade zones (Ministry of the Interior 2010). Although sex trade policy issues are not currently a major topic in Taiwan's political arena, considering that issues like same-sex marriage, which involve liberal/conservative gender dimensions, have previously made waves in Taiwan's political landscape, the possibility of such issues becoming significant political topics may not be as low as one might think.

The MMs presented in Figure 6 indicate a trend where preferences for endorsing the establishment of explicit sexual transaction regulations increase as respondents' social class declines, aligning with the initial hypothesis H5A. Upon subtracting the actual conditional marginal means, consistent results emerge across different social class differentiations, including upper class versus middle class, upper class versus lower class, or middle class versus lower class. In each comparison, the subtracted value for opinions not expressing a specific viewpoint or stance is positive, with the confidence interval not crossing 0. Conversely, for policies advocating the establishment of clear sexual transaction regulations, the subtracted value is negative, and the confidence interval does not include 0. This issue not only significantly influences candidate preferences among all respondents but also varies in impact depending on social class disparities, thus confirming the results of hypothesis H5A: clear and open sexual transaction regulations hold greater appeal for the middle and lower classes.

6. CONCLUSION

To understand the impact of candidates' external attributes and political promises on the voting preferences of Taiwanese voters, this study employs a conjoint survey experiment, a method not commonly used in Taiwan's political science community. The format of the election bulletin is referenced, combining multiple randomly assigned attributes into

hypothetical candidates for voters to choose from. This approach aims to ascertain the real impact of the candidate's appearance as an external condition and the four policy issues proposed by the candidates as potential factors influencing voter decisions. Through the conjoint survey experiment, the study clarifies respondents' true voting preferences for the numerous potential attributes, especially the external conditions of candidates and their political commitments in policy that are of particular interest in this research.

Through experimental analysis, this paper finds that appearance is a significant attribute affecting Taiwanese voters' preferences for candidates, particularly when the hypothetical candidates exhibit baby-face characteristics. However, no significant differences were found in the preferences for candidate appearance based on respondents' party affiliation or gender. Additionally, the study reveals that the policy positions of candidates indeed impact respondents' voting preferences to some extent, with cross-strait and gender policy views showing significant effects in terms of average marginal effects. In terms of subgroups' policy preferences, differences based on party affiliation in cross-strait policy preferences reflect the link between Taiwanese national identity and party affiliation; however, no significant differences were found in livelihood policy preferences. As for social class, while certain tendencies in preferences for livelihood and labor policies were observed, no significant differences were found, though these differences were noticeable in gender policy preferences, still reflecting the value of social class as part of the subgroup. Lastly, when respondent gender is used as an experimental condition, it does not affect the originally hypothesized preferences for sex trade policy views, indicating the potential emergence of liberal/conservative dimensions in Taiwan's political arena.

Despite the satisfactory results of the conjoint survey experiment, this study is still subject to external experimental conditions. As a randomized assignment experiment, it relies

heavily on computer software, necessitating the use of online surveys as the method of data collection. While the conjoint survey experiment possesses good internal validity and the sample is derived from a database of respondents selected through random sampling procedures, reducing bias compared to entirely voluntary samples, the overrepresentation of males and individuals with higher education levels in the experimental data poses limitations for generalizing the findings to the overall Taiwanese electorate. This issue calls for further investigation by subsequent researchers to continue monitoring and analysis.

Finally, although this study utilizes a conjoint survey experiment to understand respondents' preferences, it does not mean that the results or methods of this study can directly predict voter behavior. According to Campbell et al.'s (1960) causal funnel model, the evaluation of candidates is a dynamic process due to the continuous change of external information. Many potential factors, such as canvassing by friends and family, campaign rallies, sudden election scandals, and last-minute strategic voting, can influence decision-making right up to the moment of voting. Therefore, preferences for candidates derived solely based on candidate information do not directly equate to actual voting outcomes; nor is it appropriate to directly infer actual voting behavior from respondents' preferences for candidates.

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APPENDIX

Table I. Chi-Square Tests of Independence for Attributes Other Than Policy Positions and Demographic Parameters

Variable Name	Degrees of Freedom	Chi-Square Value
Candidate Age * Gender	3	2.3643
Candidate Gender * Gender	1	0.4897
Candidate Party Affiliation * Gender	3	4.8392
Candidate Education * Gender	4	4.4071
Candidate Experience * Gender	5	4.8290
Candidate Age * Age	12	9.8024
Candidate Gender * Age	4	6.2889
Candidate Party Affiliation * Age	12	4.0292
Candidate Education * Age	16	19.3393
Candidate Experience * Age	20	16.7903
Candidate Age * Education Level	12	16.5110
Candidate Gender * Education Level	4	2.6344
Candidate Party Affiliation * Education Level	12	17.7351
Candidate Education * Education Level	16	4.5303
Candidate Experience * Education Level	20	22.3063
Candidate Age * Region	15	23.6724
Candidate Gender * Region	5	4.4581
Candidate Party Affiliation * Region	15	7.6164
Candidate Education * Region	20	11.2090
Candidate Experience * Region	25	28.4856

Data Source: Huang (2023b).

Note: ***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.

Table II. Average Marginal Interaction Effects between Party and Various Policy Attributes

Attribute Interaction	Estimate	Coefficient (Standard Error)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Party * Cross-Strait Policy Views				
KMT * Defend Sovereignty	0.0132	0.0143	-0.0149	0.0413
DPP * Defend Sovereignty	0.0048	0.0142	-0.0229	0.0326
TPP * Defend Sovereignty	-0.0079	0.0143	-0.0359	0.0202
Independent * Defend Sovereignty	0.0016	0.0192	-0.0361	0.0392
KMT * Expand Exchanges	0.0028	0.0142	-0.0249	0.0306
DPP * Expand Exchanges	0.0110	0.0144	-0.0171	0.0391
TPP * Expand Exchanges	-0.0093	0.0142	-0.0372	0.0185
Independent * Expand Exchanges	0.0072	0.0192	-0.0303	0.0448
KMT * Set Aside Disputes	-0.0072	0.0180	-0.0425	0.0281
DPP * Set Aside Disputes	-0.0070	0.0179	-0.0422	0.0281
TPP * Set Aside Disputes	0.0260	0.0182	-0.0097	0.0617
Independent * Set Aside Disputes	—	—	—	—
Party * Livelihood Policy Views				
KMT * Developmental Nature	0.0224	0.0141	-0.0053	0.0501
DPP * Developmental Nature	0.0045	0.0141	-0.0232	0.0323
TPP * Developmental Nature	0.0170	0.0144	-0.0113	0.0453
Independent * Developmental Nature	0.0069	0.0191	-0.0306	0.0444
KMT * Welfare Nature	0.0185	0.0144	-0.0097	0.0466
DPP * Welfare Nature	0.0133	0.0142	-0.0145	0.0412
TPP * Welfare Nature	-0.0122	0.0142	-0.0400	0.0156

Attribute Interaction	Estimate	Coefficient (Standard Error)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Independent * Welfare Nature	0.0312	0.0193	-0.0066	0.0690
KMT * Conservative Nature	-0.0027	0.0182	-0.0384	0.0330
DPP * Conservative Nature	0.0203	0.0183	-0.0156	0.0561
TPP * Conservative Nature	0.0333	0.0183	-0.0026	0.0692
Independent * Conservative Nature	—	—	—	—
Party * Labor Policy Views				
Kuomintang * Strengthen control on migrant workers	-0.0156	0.0090	-0.0333	0.0021
Democratic Progressive Party * Strengthen control on migrant workers	0.0032	0.0090	-0.0143	0.0208
Taiwan People's Party * Strengthen control on migrant workers	-0.0127	0.0091	-0.0306	0.0052
Independent * Strengthen control on migrant workers	-0.0250	0.0158	-0.0559	0.0059
Kuomintang * Encourage migrant entry	-0.0094	0.0128	-0.0346	0.0157
Democratic Progressive Party * Encourage migrant entry	-0.0283**	0.0129	-0.0535	0.0422
Taiwan People's Party * Encourage migrant entry	-0.0123	0.0128	-0.0374	0.0127
Independent * Encourage migrant entry				
Party * Gender Policy Views				

Attribute Interaction	Estimate	Coefficient (Standard Error)	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Kuomintang * No specific opinion	0.0041	0.0091	-0.0137	0.0219
Democratic Progressive Party * No specific opinion	-0.0015	0.0090	-0.0191	0.0161
Taiwan People's Party * No specific opinion	0.0160	0.0090	-0.0016	0.0337
Independent * No specific opinion	0.0186	0.0157	-0.0121	0.0493
Kuomintang * Establish clear sex trade regulations	0.0145	0.0127	-0.0104	0.0394
Democratic Progressive Party * Establish clear sex trade regulations	0.0201	0.0128	-0.0049	0.0452
Taiwan People's Party * Establish clear sex trade regulations	0.0026	0.0128	-0.0225	0.0277
Independent * Establish clear sex trade regulations				

Data Source: Huang (2023b).

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

TABLE III. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Legislative Candidates' Attributes Based on Party Affiliation

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)	95% confidence interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pan-Blue			
Cross-Strait Policies			
Defend Sovereignty	0.3586*** (0.0143)	0.3305	0.3867
Expand Exchanges	0.5807*** (0.0148)	0.5516	0.6098
Set Aside Disputes	0.5635*** (0.0136)	0.5367	0.5903
Domestic Affairs			
Build Transportation	0.5058 (0.0132)	0.4799	0.5317
Welfare Subsidies	0.4836 (0.0134)	0.4573	0.5099
Austerity	0.5118 (0.0148)	0.4827	0.5410
Number of Respondents		266	
Total Sample Size		2660	
Pan-Green			
Cross-Strait Policies			
Defend Sovereignty	0.5869*** (0.0123)	0.5628	0.6110
Expand Exchanges	0.4413*** (0.0117)	0.4184	0.4643
Set Aside Disputes	0.4762* (0.0115)	0.4536	0.4988
Domestic Affairs			
Build Transportation	0.5164 (0.0106)	0.4955	0.5374
Welfare Subsidies	0.4989 (0.0108)	0.4777	0.5201
Austerity	0.4838 (0.0113)	0.4617	0.5060
Number of Respondents		391	
Total Sample Size		3910	
TPP			
Cross-Strait Policies			
Defend Sovereignty	0.4016*** (0.0176)	0.3670	0.4362
Expand Exchanges	0.5297 (0.0165)	0.4971	0.5623
Set Aside Disputes	0.5694*** (0.0174)	0.5350	0.6038
Domestic Affairs			
Build Transportation	0.5045 (0.0151)	0.4747	0.5343
Welfare Subsidies	0.4913 (0.0173)	0.4573	0.5254
Austerity	0.5043 (0.0173)	0.4702	0.5385
Number of Respondents		188	
Total Sample Size		1880	
Non-partisan			

Cross-Strait Policies				
Defend Sovereignty	0.4441***	(0.0136)	0.4173	0.4709
Expand Exchanges	0.5212	(0.0132)	0.4951	0.5472
Set Aside Disputes	0.5359***	(0.0130)	0.5103	0.5615
Domestic Affairs				
Build Transportation	0.4881	(0.0118)	0.4649	0.5112
Welfare Subsidies	0.5088	(0.0118)	0.4857	0.5319
Austerity	0.5041	(0.0123)	0.4799	0.5283
Number of Respondents			355	
Total Sample Size			3550	

Note:***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.

TABLE IV. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Legislative Candidates' Attribute Based on Gender

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)	95% confidence interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female			
Sex Issue			
No Opinion	0.4713*** (0.0078)	0.4559	0.4866
Establish Clear Norms	0.5296*** (0.0086)	0.5139	0.5452
Number of respondents		470	
Total sample size		4700	
Male			
Sex Issue			
No Opinion	0.4730*** (0.0061)	0.4610	0.4850
Establish Clear Norms	0.5278** (0.0063)	0.5155	0.5402
Number of respondents		730	
Total sample size		7300	

Noted: ***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.

TABLE V. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Attribute of Legislative Candidates Based on Gender (1)

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)	95% confidence interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female			
Babyface			
0 match	0.4485 (0.0291)	0.3914	0.5058
1 matches	0.4783 (0.0126)	0.4537	0.5030
2 matches	0.5124 (0.0095)	0.4936	0.5311
3/4 matches	0.5124 (0.0106)	0.4916	0.0532
Number of Respondents		470	
Total Sample Size		4700	
Male			
Babyface			
0 match	0.4580 (0.0239)	0.4110	0.5050
1 matches	0.5140 (0.0106)	0.4932	0.5348
2 matches	0.4887 (0.0070)	0.4750	0.5025
3/4 matches	0.5104 (0.0085)	0.4938	0.5270
Number of Respondents		730	
Total Sample Size		7300	

Note: ***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.

TABLE VI. Conditional MMs of Respondents' Preferences for Legislative Candidates' Attribute Based on Gender(2)

Attributes	Estimated Values Coefficients (S.E.)	95% confidence interval	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female			
Sex Issue			
No Opinion	0.4713*** (0.0078)	0.4559	0.4866
Establish Clear Norms	0.5296*** (0.0086)	0.5139	0.5452
Number of respondents		470	
Total sample size		4700	
Male			
Sex Issue			
No Opinion	0.4730*** (0.0061)	0.4610	0.4850
Establish Clear Norms	0.5278** (0.0063)	0.5155	0.5402
Number of respondents		730	
Total sample size		7300	

Noted: ***: $p < .001$, **: $p < .01$, *: $p < .05$.