Probing Closet Voters’ True Partisan Orientation through the Lens of Partisan Motivated Reasoning: A Case Study using Taiwan Data

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Abstract

Researchers examining voters’ partisan preferences have

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In attempting to understand voters’ partisan orientation, most public opinion surveys directly ask about respondents’ orientation. These surveys assume those who respond that they have no partisan orientation are “independent” voters. From a theoretical perspective, actual or “pure” independent voters do not constitute a large proportion of the electorate. In previous surveys concerning partisan identity, independent voters were mixed in with voters were non-committal, while the non-responders were also covered with the independent label. This research focuses on voters who have partisan orientation but do not reveal it, whom we refer to as closet partisans. Ignoring the partisan orientation of these closet partisans may lead to distorted descriptions of partisan support distribution, in addition to leading to misjudgment concerning support for various candidates prior to elections.

There are two factors that may lead voters to declare they have no particular partisan orientation. The first is a desire to avoid conflicts which may arise as a result of a difference of opinion with others after declaring one’s political leanings. Thus, the respondent assumes a defensive attitude. In addition, we can easily find instances in which people suspect polling organizations have ulterior motives in conducting general public opinion surveys. Because they distrust the polling organization, people will refuse to answer or be non-committal. Secondly, many voters believe “median” or “independent” seems like a more rational and independent position, and this label provides them with a sense of security in surveys. More and more members of the public want to avoid the troubles involved with being affixed with party labels by others and, thus, declare themselves as neutral or without partisan orientation to the outside world. That an ever increasing number of respondents refuse to directly respond to questions concerning partisan orientation makes the voting public increasingly mysterious. At the same time, those not openly expressing partisanship are also seen as a key constituency for electoral victories.

Because it is difficult to observe and thoroughly understand closet partisans’ true leanings, many pre-election opinion polls look upon them as a “vanishing section” of the electorate. These surveys do not take further steps to account for them, or simply omit them in their calculations. The only problem is, in presenting the partisan orientation distribution of an electoral district’s voters, we have to ask these questions: Does this large group of voters, which does not express a partisan identity, in fact have no partisan preference? When a respondent answers she has no partisan orientation, should we simply classify her as “median” or “neutral”? Do we have a sufficient understanding to present an accurate distribution of voters’ partisan orientations after simply omitting survey data for 40 to 50 percent of respondents who declare themselves as independent, or do not respond, or voters who indicate they are undecided?

This study takes both a conceptual and theoretical perspective and provides clarification concerning the meanings of “independent” and “non-committal,” in addition to presenting the preliminary results of methods used to indirectly test and discriminate for the partisan orientations of non-committal voters. In Section 1, this study points out the myths and potential problems involved in present survey methods for dealing with “independent voters.” Section 2 provides clarification concerning similarities and differences between the concepts of independent voters and closet partisans, as well as relevant theories, as a foundation for providing a new set of questions. The process and important steps involved in the creation of the survey questionnaire, telephone interviews, interviewee selection, and inviting respondents for another round of more in-depth interviews, are described in Section 3. Section 4 provides data analysis results and discusses telephone interview questions and variables useful to discriminating for partisan leanings in non-committal respondents, in addition to the effectiveness of utilizing scores for partisan supporters to reveal non-committal voters’ partisan orientation. This section further summarizes face-to-face in-depth interview content for the four closet partisans. The final section provides a detailed account of this paper’s contributions and limitations, as well as the significance of these research results for academic and pragmatic purposes.

**1. Empirical Puzzle: The Myth of the “Independent Voter”**

In the Taiwan context, where voters perceive the party system as one that functions like America’s two political party system—Pan-Blue Camp that is lead by Kuomingtan (KMT) competes with Pan-Green Camp that is lead by Democratic Progresssive Party (DPP). The independent voter described in most public opinion polls refers to a member of the public without any particular partisan orientation. The percentage of such voters appearing in common telephone surveys is ever increasing, as non-committal respondents compose approximately 40 to 50 percent of all respondents in these polls. There are even some polls in which the ratio for this type of voter exceeds 50%. Those in this cohort are in fact closet partisans. The majority of these declare themselves “independent voters” are “neutral,” or provide no response (this refers to neutral respondents combined with those who refuse to answer questions about their partisanship). From June 1992 to June 2014 the National Chengchi University Election Study Center conducted the “Tracking for Taiwanese Voter Party Identification Changes.” As Figure 1 shows, from the beginning of the first non-KMT presidency in 2000 to the end of 2008, the percentage of voters declaring themselves to be neutral or who do not respond fluctuates around 40%, and reaches 45.9% on June 2014.[[1]](#footnote-1)

[Figure 2 goes here]

[Figure 3 goes here]

In the “Survey Concerning Kaohsiung Mayoral Election Candidates” conducted by TVBS in 2006 the percentage of respondents identifying as “neutral” for partisan orientation was 46%. [[2]](#footnote-2) We find 50% of respondents questioned for the February 2014 TVBS “Taichung Mayoral Election Survey identified as “neutral” for partisan orientation.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the “2014 Tiachung Mayoral Election Candidate Support Survey” released by ET Today on March 15, 2014 the percentage of respondents who replied the “did not have any partisan orientation” reached 53.23%.[[4]](#footnote-4) A July 11, 2014 TVBS poll found 47% of respondents saw themselves as “neutral.” If further asked if they would vote for Pan-Blue or Pan-Green candidates if elections were held tomorrow, 40% of respondents answered “undecided.” [[5]](#footnote-5) Non-committal respondents are also shown to reach 45.1% in an August 2014 Taiwan Indicators Survey Research Poll (see Figure 3).[[6]](#footnote-6) Similarly, if further asked if they leaned toward the Pan-Blue or Pan-Green camp, approximately 40% of respondents insisted on not revealing their partisan orientations. From these surveys we can see direct inquiries concerning partisan orientation cannot provide a thorough understanding of the partisan leanings of the average Taiwanese voter. Even further inquiries toward respondents do not provide an accurate distribution of the true partisan leanings of voters.

Because traditional survey questions concerning partisan leanings cannot easily detect the partisan orientation of closet partisans, many surveys or media sources simply omit or indirectly calculate for them in an effort to avoid this problem. For example, when respondents were asked who they would vote for if elections were held tomorrow in a July 2014 TVBS Taichung mayoral election poll, 42% responded the DPP’s Lin Chia-lung, 33% answered the KMT’s Jason Hu, while 26% of respondents were undecided. In their analysis of this July 11 survey, TVBS simply omitted the closet partisans who made up 26% of respondents and simply stated that “the 16 point difference between these two candidates had been reduced to 9 percentage points.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Another example is a poll released by ETtoday on Survey’s June 22, 2014 entitled “The Fight for Mid-Taiwan in 2014-Survey of Support for Mayoral and County Head Candidates for Taichung, Changhua, and Nantou.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Of all respondents 54.19% in this surrey saw themselves as “not having any partisan orientation.” However, when asked “Who would you like to see elected as the mayor of Taichung in the end electoral showdown between the Pan/Blue and Pan-Green camps for mayoral and county head positions?” 47.87% of respondents replied they wanted the DPP’s Lin Chia-lung to become Taichung’s mayor, while 20.41% hoped Jason Hu would win. In addition, 31.73% responded “both are acceptable” or “I do not like either.” The June 25 ETtoday News headline stated “Lin Chia-lung Holding 28 Percentage Point Lead over Jason Hu,” thus ignoring the hidden potential influence of one-third of closet partisan respondents who did not reveal their partisan identity. [[9]](#footnote-9)What is more, there are also certain media entities which assume half of closet partisans are Pan-Blue and the other half Pan-Green in its projections.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Because this methodology and style or reporting, of simply neglecting closet partisans, seems almost ubiquitous and has been utilized for some time in news media reports, it is now accepted as commonplace by voters. This presents a dilemma. If we neglect closet partisans and simply utilize the Pan-Blue/ Pan-Green ratio in our calculations, it is quite possible we are not presenting a faithful account of the overall electorate’s party identification distribution. What is more, we may mislead the public in its understanding local politics and its interpretation of electoral trends. This methodology creates a lack of clarity, and we believe it is necessary to provide an overall conceptual and theoretical methodology which will allow both academia and the public at large to more accurately understand and report on voters’ partisan preference distribution in future electoral research polls and reports. The first step to achieving these ends is to provide conceptual clarification.

**2. The Concept of Closet Partisans and Independent Voters: How They Are Defined, and How They Can be Detected**

Voters who are non-committal include closet partisans and independent voters. The “closet partisan” referred to in this study is a voter who, among non-committal voters, states she has no partisan identity but, in fact, can be observed objectively to have party leanings. Specifically, they are respondents who identify as “neutral,” “undecided,” or “no response” in 5 or 7 point party identification scales, but who nonetheless have partisan preferences.

Political researchers have already pointed out the necessity of providing an accurate account of closet partisans in measurements of partisan identification. John R. Petrocik (1974) argues that the 7-point party identification scale does not accurately represent the actual transitive properties of the partisan preference strength. It is not necessarily the case that those with strong party identification are more likely than those with weaker identification to participate politically or seek political information. What is more, there are some independents whose positions on certain issues are closer to the positions of political parties than voters with partisan leanings. Miller and Wattenberg (1983) further assert there is a difference between respondents who answer “independent” and those who answer “no partisan preference” when conducting surveys. They are two separate concepts. Miller and Wattenberg believe the “independent voter” may be a “closet partisan,” as the true independent voter has no clear party identity and is not concerned with politics. This description is consistent with the characterization of independent voters provided in the political science classic *The American Voter* (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stock, 1960, pp. 102–143).[[11]](#footnote-11) Expanding on this view, Johnston (2006) states the percentage of independent voters within an electorate is extremely small. While these voters may have weaker party identification than those who openly admit to partisan affiliation, they cannot be said to have no party identity. What is more, according to Johnston, some independent voters express positive identification with both political parties. Therefore, he believes the so-called (purely) independent will not move on the party identification spectrum in traditional measurements of partisanship. Johnston further points out, in providing a description of how long term party identification is distributed, that traditional measurements of party identification may cause follow-up studies to neglect researching (purely) independent voters, in addition to being unable to characterize independent voter activities.

Magleby and Nelson (2012) also assert independent voters are not a large group and must be separated into those with partisan leanings and pure independent voters, as these two types of voters are manifestly different concerning their interest in elections and voting choices. They utilize critical issues which divide the Democratic and Republican Parties from 2008 to 2012 on policy in performing their examination. These issues include health care, the economy, the Iraq War, abortion, and same-sex marriage, and other issues. Magleby and Nelson find independents who favor one party are extremely similar to strong partisans in their determinations. In summation, while the concept of the “closet partisan” proposed by Miller and Wattenberg (1983) may not cover all who refuse to answer or who are non-committal in telephone survey, initial research clearly indicates that, outside of pure independents, all others identifying as independent voters may have partisan orientations.

According to recent political psychology research, closet partisans may very well have partisan orientation, as voters do not simply receive information from political parties, but also require parties provide a distinction between themselves and others, as well as establish significance. According to the concept of “partisan motivated reasoning” stemming from this perspective, political parties[[12]](#footnote-12) selectively disseminate partisan messages to potential supporters while those with partisan leanings will actively seek those messages and, what is more, will interpret those messages in order to fit or satisfy their partisan orientation (Johnston, 2006; Kim, Wang, Gotlieb, Gabay, & Edgerly, 2013; Kleinnijenhuis, van Hoof, & Oegema, 2006; Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). After being received, these messages will be amplified in the citizen based on her personal feelings, and this will determine voting decisions as well as other political behavior. Research already exists which indicates the voting behavior of voters with partisan orientation is not determined by policy evaluations, but rather is the result of prompts from partisan messaging (Jimenez, 2009). The direction of public political issue understanding is often guided by political parties or influenced by information undergoing latent partisan reinterpretation (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). This directional guidance does not influence all of one person’s political actions, but can sufficiently influence the order of importance an individual assigns to various issues.

From the perspective of “partisan motivated reasoning” theory, party identification or partisan orientation plays an extremely important role in terms of public opinion understanding and information acquisition for voters. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that, in the process of political socialization, the majority of citizens consciously or unconsciously cultivate partisan leanings. Partisan opinions and preferences may then form in the voter when partisan prompts are presented. At present, that survey methods employed by opinion polls does not completely capture partisan orientation distributions poses a problem.

## 3. Research Design

## [Figure 3 goes here]

The process of this research is divided into 7 steps. As indicated in Figure 3, Step 1 involves designing a comprehensive set of indirect survey questions which will measure partisan orientation based on theoretical principles. In step 2, we find several people with clear Pan-Blue or Pan-Green partisan orientations for the pretest in order to confirm the reliability of the indirect survey questions. After filtering out participants with partisan orientation or who are closet partisans, step 3 verifies explanatory powers of variables in order to determine which questions can discriminate for partisan leaners. Step 4 creates an index for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green leaning from the chosen variables, in addition to making inferences concerning closet partisan score distributions and determining whether closet partisans in the first telephone interview are Pan-Green or Pan-Blue supporters. In step 5 we re-contact closet partisans: Second telephone interviews are conducted with closet partisans who consented to be contacted again in the first interview. Step 6 performs a comparison between expected results for closet partisans and second interview results. In Step 7, we visit several respondents judged to be either Pan-Blue or Pan-Green supporters (from among closet partisans in the first interview) for more detailed interview discussions in order to determine reasons for the accuracy or inaccuracy of survey questions, as well as to examine these closet partisans’ understanding of policy, and how their partisan consciousness is triggered.

Because the object of this study is citizens who have partisan leanings while claiming to be independents, the first step is to create indirect survey questions to discriminate for partisan orientation. We utilize various topics which are highly correlated with partisan identity to differentiate Pan-Blue and Pan-Green orientation. Based on Taiwanese party identification literature we choose indirect issues for evaluating partisan preference including national identity and stance on unification issue (Wu, Nai-The 2002, 84), ethnic identity (Shyu Huoyan 1993; Chen Lu-huei 2000; Chang Chuan-hsien and Huang Ji 2011, 5; Yu Chen-hua and Lin Qiyao　2013, 199), political symbolism (Chen Heng-ming 1986; Chang Chun-hui 2012, 14), selective media exposure (Dilliplane, Goldman, & Mutz, 2012), and other issues to design our questionnaire.[[13]](#footnote-13)

(1) Design for Indirect Partisan Orientation Survey Questions

This study’s indirect survey questionnaire for partisan orientation includes 1 traditional question concerning partisan orientation (which party’s position is closest to yours?) and 17[[14]](#footnote-14) indirect survey questions including 4 questions on partisan support and tendencies, 1 question on media exposure, 2 questions on national identity, 3 questions on the unification issue and cross-strait relations, 5 questions concerning political symbolism, 1 question about policy views, and 1 about voting choices. For survey questionnaire please refer to Appendix 1. The principle behind the design of these questions is that they must all involve a topic for which the Pan-Blue and Pan-Green camps have distinct positions, and the respondent must be able to answer without too much deliberation.

First we ask indirect survey questions for detecting partisan orientation:

* Do you agree that the opposition party DPP should apologize for Taiwan’s present social disorder? (01) strongly agree (02) agree (03) no opinion (04) disagree (05) strongly disagree (99) refused to answer ── One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who answer “strongly agree” or “agree.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “disagree” or “strongly disagree” receive 1 point for Pan-Green support.
* Do you agree that the ruling party KMT should apologize for Taiwan’s present social disorder? ─ One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly agree” or “agree.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “disagree” or “strongly disagree” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* Do you agree that president should apologize for Taiwan’s present social disorder? ─ One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly agree” or “agree.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “disagree” or “strongly disagree” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* How much do you want the DPP (Pan-Green) to win a sweeping victory over the KMT (Pan-Blue)? ─ One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly desire” or “desire.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “do not desire” or “absolutely do not desire” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.

Second is media exposure questions:

* At present the political commentary programs with the highest ratings in Taiwan are TVBS’s (channel 56) “2100 hei bai dui lun” [2100 Black and White] hosted by Luo Zhiqiang, and SETN News Station’s “Xin tai wan jia you” [Let’s Go New Taiwan] hosted by Liao Hsiao-chun. Which one would you watch if you could only choose one? (Those who do not have a cable television subscription or do not normally watch television may simply answer based on their impressions of these programs.) (01) 2100 Black and White (02) Let’s Go New Taiwan (03) both (04) neither (99) refused to answer One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who choose the TVBS program Those who answer “both” or “neither” receive a score of 0. Those who choose the SETN program receive 1 point for Pan-Green support.

Third is national identity questions:

* When our sports teams compete in international events, should they be referred to as “the Chinese team” or “the Taiwanese team”? (01)2100 Chinese team (02) Taiwanese (03) both (99) don’t know/ refused to answer──One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who choose “Chinese team.” Those who answer “both” receive a score of 0. Those who choose “Taiwanese team” receive 1 point for Pan-Green support.
* Would you rather our government use the name “Republic of China” or “Taiwan” when applying to membership in international organizations? (01) Republic of China (02) Taiwan (99) don’t know/ refused to answer──One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who choose “Republic of China.”Those who choose “Taiwan” receive 1 point for Pan-Green support.

Fourth is position on reunification issue and cross-strait relation questions:

* Would you like this country to change its name to “Taiwan” or the “Republic of Taiwan” someday? (01) strongly desire (02) desire (03) no opinion (04) do not desire (05) absolutely do not desire (99) refused to answer ── One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly desire" or “desire.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “do not desire” or “absolutely do not desire” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* Would you like to see Taiwan and Mainland China reunite? (01) strongly desire (02) desire (03) no opinion (04) do not desire (05) absolutely do not desire (99) refused to answer ── One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who answer “strongly desire" or “desire.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “do not desire” or “absolutely do not desire” receive 1 point for Pan-Green support.
* At present our government is promoting economic and trade negotiations. Do you believe the government should be daring and proactive or cautious in these talks? (01) more proactive (02) more cautious (99) refused to answer──One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who choose “more proactive.”Those who choose “more cautious” receive 1 point for Pan-Green support.

The fifth set of questions involves political symbolism:

* Many people believe under the leadership of Cher Wang (hTC CEO) hTC is no longer a Taiwanese enterprise and call for a public boycott of the company. (Continued on next page) Do you agree? (01) strongly agree (02) agree (03)no opinion (04) disagree (05) strongly disagree (99) refused to answer [[15]](#footnote-15)── One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly agree" or “agree.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “disagree” or “strongly disagree” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* Do you support removing bronze statues of Chiang Kai-shek from public places as some people advocate? (01) strongly support (02) support (03) no opinion (04) do not support (05) absolutely do not support (99) refused to answer ── One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly support” or “support.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “do not support” or “absolutely do not support” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* Do you believe the park in Taipei commemorating Chiang Kai-shek should keep its present name of Freedom Square, or revert to its old name of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall? (01) Freedom Square (02) Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (99) do not know/ refused to answer[[16]](#footnote-16)—One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who support leaving the name “Freedom Square.”Those who support changing the name back to “Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* Do you support some people’s view that the national flag should be changed because it contains the KMT emblem? (01) strongly support (02) support (03) no opinion (04) do not support (05) absolutely do not support (99) do not know/ refused to answer [[17]](#footnote-17)── One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents who answer “strongly support" or “support.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “do not support” or “absolutely do not support” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.
* Some believe the verse in the national anthem which cites “Three principles of the people and the foundation of our party” is a reference to the KMT. Is this something you are concerned about? (01) strongly concerned (02) concerned (03) no opinion (04) not concerned (05) absolutely not concerned (99) do not know/ refused to answer— One point for Pan-Green support is given to respondents are concerned with KMT symbolism in the national anthem. Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “not concerned” or “absolutely not concerned” receive 1 point for Pan-Blue support.

Sixth is policy position questions:

* Would you like to see Taiwan adopt a voluntary enlistment system for its military? (01) strongly desire (02) desire (03) no opinion (04) do not desire (05) absolutely do not desire (99) do not know/ refused to answer── One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who answer “strongly desire" or “desire.” Those answering “no opinion” receive a score of 0. Those who answer “do not desire” or “absolutely do not desire” receive 1 point for Pan-Green support. [[18]](#footnote-18)

The seventh set of questions regards voting choice:

* Which group of candidates did you vote for in the 2012 presidential election? (01) Frank Hsieh, Su Tseng-chang (02) Ma Ying-jeou, Vincent Siew (90) other candidates (95) I was not eligible to vote at that time (99) I don’t remember/ refused to answer ──One point for Pan-Blue support is given to respondents who choose (01).Those who answer (02) or receive 1 point for Pan-Green support. A score of 0 is received for all other answers.

One more indirect survey question to detect partisan orientation is added in the second telephone interview. As this question is answered by the same respondent who answered the initial questions, we use it to compare partisan orientation for closet partisans in order to determine the accuracy of questions in discriminating for partisan leaning:

* Our country requires a strong leader. What party should the president elected in 2016 be from? (We remind respondents they may only choose from parties which can nominate a presidential candidates and have the potential to win the election) (01) KMT (02) DPP (03) Pan-Blue (KMT, People First Party) (04) Pan-Green (DPP, TSU, Independence Party) ──. Those answering (01) or (03) are Pan-Blue, while those who answer (02) or(04) are Pan-Green.

##  (2) Questionnaire Pretest Results

For the telephone interview we first found 10 citizens with clear partisan orientation as subjects for the pretest and examine their answers to determine if they adhere to our expectations. Exactly half of pretest subjects are KMT supporters, while the other half supports the DPP. They are all over 20 years of age and have the right to vote. Half are male and the other half female, and all have completed high school or vocational school. Pretest interviews were conducted face to face, and all were conducted on a one to one basis.

Items for which all 4 respondents who supported the KMT provided the same answers included: They all chose the television program “2100 Black and White” for political discussion program, chose Republic of China for national identity, did not desire Taiwanese independence while at the same time not desiring unification, felt the government should maintain a proactive and positive attitude toward cross-strait relations, did not want the DPP to win a large victory over the KMT in the 2014 year end elections, and voted for the KMT’s Ma Ying-jeou and Wu Den-yih in the 2012 presidential elections.

Among these questions, those which proved relatively poor at discriminating for partisanship included questions concerning ethnic identity (the KMT supporters we chose all saw themselves as Taiwanese or both Chinese and Taiwanese), and whether or not the president should apologize for social disorder. In addition, they did not necessarily agree with Cher Wang’s statement that hTC was a Chinese brand, nor did they feel the name of the park commemorating Chiang Kai-shek should revert to its former name.

Items for which all 4 respondents who supported the DPP provided the same answers included: They all chose SETN News Station’s “Let’s Go New Taiwan” for their political discussion program, Taiwan for national identity, Taiwanese for ethnic identity, supported boycotting hTC for declaring it a Chinese brand, were in favor of removing bronze statues of Chiang Kai-shek, believed the president should apologize for social disorder, hoped the DPP would win a decisive victory over the KMT in 2014 year-end mayoral and county head elections, and voted for the DPP’s Cai Yingwen and Su Jia-chyuan in the 2012 presidential elections. In summation, this simple pretest provided initial confirmation for our expectations: Two topics, media exposure and past voting behavior, can effectively discriminate for the partisan orientation for supporters of both parties.

(3) Data

 The source of data for this study’s telephone interviews and in-depth follow up interviews is random sampling telephone interviews performed through a research university’s opinion research center. Only respondents who clearly indicated consent were contacted for second telephone interviews. All interviews for this research were conducted with Taiwan’s 23 counties and cities, and respondents were all citizens of age 20 or above. The period for survey ranged from January 10 to January 24 of 2014, and interviews were conducted between 6 to 10 in the evening. Each interview took approximately 15 minutes, and 1,072 subjects completed the interview. Sampling error is approximately ±3% for a reliability estimate of 95%. Contact rate was only approximately 10% and approximately 30% of those answering the phone refused to take part in the interview.

We apply three encoding classifications to respondents based on their answers to traditional questions of partisan orientation: KMT, People First Party, New Party, and other Pan-Blue are classified as Pan-Blue voters (196 total); DPP, Taiwan Solidarity Union, other Pan-Green are classified as Pan-Green voters (218 total); independents, those claiming no partisan affiliation, those who support both camps, and those who support neither, are categorized as closet partisans (648 total), others and those who refuse to answer are categorized as missing values (10 total). [[19]](#footnote-19)It is worth noting that if we take closet partisans and those who refuse to answer as item-non-respondents concerning party identification, as many as 61.4% of respondents will not be included in calculations concerning the ratio of Pan-Blue and Pan-Green camp supporters.[[20]](#footnote-20)

 The second round of follow-up telephone surveys was conducted from March 6 to March 14 of 2014 and targeted the 117 closet partisan respondents from the first telephone interview who agreed to be contacted again. Of these, 91 completed the second interview. In order facilitate the clear expression of positions in respondents concerning the indices created for this study, “do not know/ it depends” was removed from the list of possible answers for all questions in the second round of interviews. This forced respondents to express an opinion for each question.

**5. Research Findings**

This section presents the results of this study’s research steps and performs the following three tasks: verification of variable significance, comparison of closet partisan score distribution and second interview, and more detailed interviews with closet partisans with pure independent tendencies.

(1) Variable Significance Verification

After collecting telephone interview data, we first utilize a Chi-square test to verify the correlation between each variable and party identification. We then use binary logistic regression to verify whether these topics all have an independent and statistically significant impact with respect to Pan-Blue or Pan-Green support (Step 3 of this study). [[21]](#footnote-21)Firstly, we perform a Chi-square test of independence for all questions and statistical significance for these questions is .01 or above, which indicates correlation between all questions and party identification, accords with our expectations when designing the questionnaire.

We exclude Pan-Green supporters from data in using the binary logistic regression model to analyze Pan-Green supporters and leave only Pan-Blue supporters and closet partisans (N=844). Likewise, when analyzing Pan-Green supporters, we exclude Pan-Blue supporters in the data and leave only Pan-Green supporters and closet partisans (N=866). Analysis results indicate the following: Questions such as those asked concerning political discussion programs, the park commemorating Chiang Kai-shek, whether or not the Pan-Green party would defeat the Pan-Blue camp in year-end elections, voting choice in the 2012 presidential elections, and others can discriminate between Pan-Blue supporters and closet partisans. Citizens who choose “2100 Black and White,” those who support changing the name of Freedom Square back to Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, those who do not desire the Pan-Green camp to win a decisive victory over the Pan-Blue camp in year-end mayoral and county head elections, and those who voted for the Pan-Blue candidates in the 2012 presidential elections are more likely to be Pan-Blue camp supporters.

Indirect questions which were beneficial in discriminating between Pan-Green supporters and closet partisans included indirect survey questions concerning political discussion program choice, the name used in international sporting events, the unification issue, whether or not the Pan-Green Camp would win decisive victory over Pan-Blue in year-end elections, and voting choice in the 2012 presidential elections. Those who choose SETN News Station’s “Let’s Go New Taiwan,” those who desire to use the name “Taiwan” in international sporting events, those who do not desire unification, those who want the Green-Camp to win a decisive victory in (2014) year-end elections, and those who voted for Pan-Green candidates Cai Yingwen and Su Jia-chyuan in the 2012 presidential election are likely to be Pan-Green camp supporters.

These results demonstrate these questions are beneficial to detecting whether or not a voter has clear partisan orientation in relationship to closet partisans, but does not identify the determinant factor for whether or not a person supports the Pan-Green or Pan-Blue camp. That is, those with clear positions on these issues are easily identified as Pan-Blue or Pan-Green supporters. Therefore, we should also take questions, which are highly statistically significant in Chi-square tests into consideration if we want to determine whether a closet partisan tends toward supporting the Pan-Blue or Pan-Green camp.

(2) Comparison Between Closet Partisan Score Distribution and Second Interview Results

Hereafter, we create an index for Pan-Blue or Pan-Green orientation after performing sum valuation for the 17 original variables for Pan-Blue or Pan-Green orientation. We then find a tangent point for this study’s Pan-Blue/ Pan-Green score distribution (Step 4). In this step, 1 represents Pan-Blue orientation, and -1 Pan-Green for the 17 questions. Those answering “do not know” and independents are represented by 0 (1 and -1 balance each other out) before producing the integral distribution for blue and green supporters. Positive numbers, starting with 1 and extending rightward on the X axis, represent Pan-Blue tendencies. Higher positive numbers represent a stronger tendency toward Pan-Blue. Conversely, negative numbers starting with -1 and extending toward the left side of the X axis represent Pan-Green tendencies. Higher negative numbers represent a greater tendency toward Pan-Green.

In order to obtain a relatively complete integral distribution, we adopt relatively strict methodology: Only those who answer all questions are included in sum valuation analysis for partisan identity. As a result, of the 196 people who originally self-identified as Pan-Blue supporters, only 113 were included in integral sum valuation, 156 of the original 218 self-identifying Pan-Green supporters were included in integral distribution calculations. The following Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate Pan-Blue and Pan-Green supporter scores:

Figure 4 goes here

Figure 5 goes here

Figure 6 goes here

These 2 figures demonstrate the scale (-17~+17) this study employs is beneficial to discriminating for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green support. From Figure 4 we can determine an integral of 1 or higher indicates a person who clearly supports the Pan-Blue camp, while an integral of -2 or lower indicates a person who is clearly a Pan-Green supporter. [[22]](#footnote-22) We then apply this scale and the tangent point to closet partisan index scores. Of the 648 respondents judged to be closet partisans in the first round of interviews, 301 fulfilled the criterion of answering all questions in total. Figure 6 presents the integral distribution for closet partisans who answered all questions. As predicted, partisan orientation for closet partisans is not concentrated at the number line center. The overwhelming majority of closet partisans are not independents and have clear partisan orientations; the majority of them are (latent) Pan-Green supporters. In addition, this distribution shows the majority of (latent) Pan-Blue supporters are weak party identifiers. That is, there is clearly a smaller number of strong party identifiers for Pan-Blue in comparison to Pan-Green supporters.

Figure 7 goes here

Among the 648 closet partisans from the first round of telephone interviews, 339 agreed to be contacted for our second telephone interviews. We later attempted to contact these 339 respondents and, after comparing respondent identification numbers, found 177 were willing to participate in the second round of interviews (Step 5 of this study). We utilize the methodology explained above to observe their integral distribution (see figure 7) and determine those with a score of 1 or higher are Pan-Blue supporters (81), while those with a score of -1 or lower are Pan-Green supporters (88). Another 8 had an integral of 0.

At this point our study utilized three methods to indirectly explore closet partisans’ actual party preferences: A is the estimation of Pan-Blue or Pan-Green tendencies in the above-mentioned scaled integral distribution for the first telephone interview. B is Pan-Blue or Pan-Green tendencies as directly revealed in the second round of interviews by closet partisans either voluntarily or after inquiries (direct disclosure). C is the direct introduction of the question “Our country requires a strong leader. What party should the president elected in 2016 be from?” in the second round of interviews with the answer serving to reveal partisan preference for closet partisans (indirect disclosure). In order to compare A and B, the respondents had to be closet partisans who agreed to be contacted again and completed all answers for both telephone interviews. There were 58 in total. We utilize a paired samples T test to examine the differences between partisan orientation distributions derived from these 3 methods (Step 6 of this study).

Comparisons indicate no significant difference for A and B (t= -0.5612，p>0.05), no significant difference for A and C (t=1.6157，p>0.05). However, there was significant difference for B and C (t=3.6631，p<0.001). Consistency for A and B is 65.5%, 79.3% for A and C, and 64.8% for B and C. We find methods like B, which force a response from participants creates a volatile partisan orientation distribution. Directly inquiries may have the unintended consequence of causing defensiveness or angering respondents, thus eliciting responses which may not reflect participants’ actual positions. Results are most consistent for method A, which utilizes multiple question sum valuation, and C, which adopts a single indirect question to reveal partisan orientation. As such, we deduce A would be an ideal method for replacing actual present practices in which respondents are directly asked about partisan preference, as in method B. The following analysis supports this assumption.

Next, we perform a comparison between methods of deduction often used in present practice (Method α, which is to omit closet partisans and simply calculate the ratio of Pan-Green and Pan-Blue supporters) and this study’s results. Here, we take those we judge to be closet partisans with Pan-Green leanings from the first round, reclassify closet partisans from those interviews, and recalculate modal distribution for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green supporters (Method β).

Comparison results are listed in Table 1. Firstly, Method β largely reduces the percentage of invalid values produced by Method α (including closet partisans and those who refuse to answer). Invalid values are reduced from 61.4% to 35.0 and the problem of non-response for party identification is largely solved. What is more, The number of invalid values produced by Method β could be even lower, as we could not deduce partisan orientation for 18 of the 375 respondents, and another 10 refused to answer questions. Only 347 were included in the scaled integral distribution (method A) because other participants did respond to all 17 key questions (some questions were not answered). Because sum valuation could not be calculated for them, they were excluded. Therefore, we could lower the percentage of invalid values by reducing the number of indirect survey questions.

Thirdly, while the results in terms of percentages is similar for the 2 methods, they vary widely in their significance. This is mainly because, among closet partisans, half are Pan-Blue while the other half are Pan-Green. Therefore, the ratios will be similar after recalculations are conducted. In other words, if the Pan-Blue/ Pan-Green ratios are similar, or if there is sufficient reason to believe support for the two camps is even, it might suffice to use Method α. However, if it there is a large difference between the two camps, or if a spiral of silence (that is, the supporters of one camp are clearly hiding their partisan preference) is present in one of the camps, these traditional methods can cause considerable prediction errors.

(3) Further Interviews with Closet Partisans with Pure Independent Tendencies

 The final step of this study is face-to-face interviews with closet partisans. In addition to observing whether or not their statements adhere with partisan motivated reasoning, we further examine whether or not the indirect survey questions proposed by this study can detect partisan leanings in these closet partisans. [[23]](#footnote-23) As a result of possessing limited resources, we choose values from 1 (this may be pure independents or Pan Blue leaning) to -1 (this may be pure independents or Pan Green leaning) as our integral for closet partisans in performing the third interview. In comparison to closet partisans possessing partisan leanings, these respondents had true independent tendencies and were extremely on guard. Many of them kindly refused to be interviewed. Among the 4 we were finally able to interview, some were evasive in their answers. While small sample sizes and individual cases may not be representative, these 4 people expressed both Pan-Blue and Pan-Green partisan positions in answering the 17 questions. As such, their expression is sufficiently representative of independent leaning closet partisan mentality, and this section’s finding are beneficial in making deductions concerning the thoughts of pure independents found among closest partisans. Information on these respondents can be found in Table 2.[[24]](#footnote-24)

[ Table 2 goes here ]

In conducting a series of visits, we found it difficult to determine true partisan orientation by asking a single question or indirect questions about party identity once we had asked directly about partisan identity and caused them to act like closet partisans. Utilizing multiple indirect questions to surmise party identification is the preferable method. We list data concerning whether or not questions are accurate in detecting for Pan-Green or Pan-Blue tendencies for closet partisans in Table 1. While, at the outset, this study did not target a particular party in designing questions, we found our questions were more able to discriminate for Pan-Green-leaning closet partisans. Overall, the types of questions which were more able to discriminate for partisan leaning in closet partisans included national identity and the unification issue, cross-strait relations, media exposure and voting choice. Among these, questions in the areas of media exposure and voting choice showed the best discriminatory results.

 [Figure 3 goes here]

**6. Conclusion and Discussion**

“Independent voters” are generally acknowledged as a group of voters which claims no orientation toward a political party and have no consistent political positions. In theory, however, these voters may not be telling the truth when they claim to be neutral or that they have no partisan orientation when answering survey questions. This is particularly the case in Taiwan and has brought up a central point concerning present methods for calculating party support levels which requires discussion: omitting independent voters, or not addressing the problem of data loss due to non-response items, may lead to inaccuracy in party support distributions. Chuang Shu-Mei and Hong Yongtai (2011) suggest integrating “party non-identification” questions with those of party identification in order to more accurately predict respondent voter choices. However, as this method only utilizes data for respondents who have clear partisan orientation in its estimations, it does not address the ever-increasing percentage of people who do not respond to party identification questions as a problem. In other words, this method can accurately tell us who voters with partisan orientation will vote for, but it provides no clear answer concerning the partisan orientation of this large number of closet partisans. Firstly, this study indicates that, while there are pure independents among the closet partisans neglected by both academia and actual practices, those generally referred to as independent voters are, in fact, closet partisans. Secondly, our study provides a number of indirect survey questions for partisan orientation which both academia and real world practice may utilize. The combined use of these questions will undoubtedly be beneficial in lowering the percentage of closet partisans in surveys. If utilized during non-election periods, this methodology will be beneficial to gaining a better understanding of the distribution of party supporters within a targeted electorate. During election periods, it can serve to advance the accuracy of predicting election outcomes.

This study encounters four major limitations which we hope future research will be able to resolve. First, this study defines closet partisans as “those who are non-committal concerning partisan preference in telephone interviews” and does not address the problem of respondents who do not express a candidate preference. While we can create questions based on theory to predict partisan preference for the former, it may be difficult to get a clear picture of the later because many members of the Taiwanese electorate base their voting decisions on candidate rather than party preferences. As the focus of this study is actual partisan preference distributions (the former), it should be applied for predicting party and not individual candidate vote share. We suggest future research perform further comparisons concerning these two types of closet partisans, as this will be beneficial to improving and revising methods for detecting party identity in closet partisans. The indirect survey questions this study suggests will also contribute to more accurate predictions of individual candidate voting, in addition to party preference, if there are high levels of overlap between the two.

Secondly, with respect to methodology, while this study utilizes multiple indirect survey questions to discriminate for partisan orientation in closet partisans, its predictive results are not ideal. It achieves 60 to 70 percent accuracy with respect to those who answered all questions in both telephone interviews. As we could not force respondents to be interviewed a second time, nor could we insist they answer all questions, it was inevitable that observations which could be compared with predictions would be lost. We may be able to increase observations for analysis in the future by reducing the number of indirect survey questions.

This study presents the following suggestions for future research to improve upon survey question design from the perspective of partisan motivated understanding theory. These may increase the ability of survey questions to discriminate for partisan preference in closet partisans, as well as improve their predictive power. The integration of multiple questions and weight of single questions should be considered as well. The first is to utilize key words which point out the connection between support for and opposition to partisan positions. For example, if in the question “At present our government is promoting economic and trade negotiations. Do you believe the government should be daring and proactive or cautious in these talks?“ we replace “government” with “the ruling KMT,” or “party in power,” we may receive more precise responses from closet partisans. Secondly, more weight should be given to questions about media exposure and voting choice, in addition to reducing timely symbols or using them sparingly, and to utilizing fewer questions about policy positions. We believe any method utilized in solving the problem of this “vanishing section” of the electorate is more beneficial to obtaining an actual understanding of the electorate. We hope continuations of this study adopt various methods in detecting closet partisan’s true orientation. Methods they could employ include integrating the indirect survey questions suggested by this study with multiple interpolation to surmise the actual leanings of closet partisans, or using factor analysis to create even more effective key or single questions within question groups. Furthermore, a comparison with “specific negative party identification” questions could be performed. It is necessary to note that it is not completely verify the accuracy of predictions concerning closet partisans’ actual partisan leanings. Therefore, we believe any comparison of the advantages of various methods cannot provide an ultimate answer as to which one is better.

Third, although the category of closet partisans includes independents, this research does not address methods for answering the question on the number of pure independents. We found some voters situated precisely in the middle of the index after adopting multiple question integral methodology and utilizing progressive interviews to encourage closet partisans to reveal their partisan orientation as much as possible. However, the middle point of the index in this research design simply indicates extreme ambivalence with respect to party identity. Whether or not these people resemble the definition of a pure independent must be explored in future research as well. Closet partisans for whom the integral this research parses closely approaches the precise center of the number line were all extremely guarded in interviews. None of them consented to face-to-face interviews. With some effort, we found the 4 willing closet partisans with pure independent tendencies. However, in the end they still expressed partisan preferences. As such, even if we assigned integrals of +1, -1 to them, it would be difficult for us to classify them as true pure independents. We hope future research will further explore and provide more information concerning these voters’ positions and actions.

 Finally, our study collected data during a non-election period and, therefore, was unable to determine if the closet partisans we determined to have partisan preferences vote in a manner consistent with their partisan preferences. We suggest future research on closet partisans utilize cohort sample tracking, in addition to integrating actual voting data with pre-election partisan orientation analysis, as this will be beneficial to predicting election results, tracking the formation and strengthening of partisan preferences, in addition to providing a clearer picture the balance of power between blue and green.

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Figure 1: Research Design and Steps

Step 3: Chi-square test of independence and binary logistic regression model is used to discern topic influence on voters with partisan leanings.

Step 1: Create questionnaire

Step 2: Questionnaire Pretest

Step 4: Create Pan-Blue and Pan-Green indicators from independent variables and confirm the overall score distribution for those with partisan leanings.

First Telephone Interview

(Steps 3 through 6 undertaken using telephone interview data)

Step 5: Calculate distribution of overall scores for closet partisans and make judgments concerning sample partisan orientation. Hand-revealing questions are added and subjects for second telephone interview are chosen from those who consented to be contacted again.

Second Telephone Interview

(only those who consented during the first interview were contacted again)

Step 6:

(Introduce second telephone interview results)

Perform comparison between closet partisan estimated results and second interview results

Step 7: Perform more intensive interview of respondents judged to be Pan-Blue or Pan-Green leaning closet partisans in telephone interviews

Figure 2： Distribution of Taiwanese Voter Partisan Preference Trends (June 1992-June 2014)

Source: National Chengchi University Election Study Center Graph of Distribution Trends for Attitudes on Important Political Issues

Figure 3: Party Identification Tracking Analysis-Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Distribution：

Source: Taiwan Indicators Survey Research Poll

Figure 4: Integral Distribution for Pan-Blue and Answered all Questions （N=113）

Figure 5: Integral Distribution for Pan-Green and Answered all Questions （N=156）

Step 6: Score Distribution for Closet Partisan and Answered All Questions

Note: There were 131 closet partisans who tended to favor the Pan-Blue Camp (1 or above) and 152 who tended to favor the Pan-Green Camp (-1 or below). In addition, there were 18 people who showed median attitudes (exactly 0).

Figure 7: Score Distribution for Closet Partisan Answering All Questions and Interviewed a Second Time (N=177)

Table 1 Comparison for Pan-Green Supporter Distribution Calculations and Results

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Direct Calculation of Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Percentages with Closet Partisans Ignored (A) | Column Number 1 | Percentage |
| Pan-Blue Supporter | 196 | 47.3% |
| Pan-Green Supporter | 218 | 52.7% |
| Total | 414 | 100% |
| Invalid Values (closet partisan and refused to answer) | 658 | 61.4% |
| Re-calculated percentages for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Based on Integral Distribution (B) | Number | Percentage |
| Pan-Blue Supporter | 327 | 46.9% |
| Pan-Green Supporter | 370 | 53.1% |
| Total | 697 | 100% |
| Invalid Values (closet partisan and refused to answer) | 375 | 35.0% |

Note: Table compiled by author（N=1,072）

Figure 2： Data Table for Each Detailed Interview

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Identification Number | Original Identification Number | Date of Interview | Telephone Interview ResultsJudgment Concerning Partisan Orientation | Gender | Highest Education | Age | residence | Place of Interview |
| A | 536 | July 26, 2014 | Pan-Green Tendencies | female | junior college | 64 | Kaohsiung | cafe |
| B | 189 | July 26, 2014 | Pan-Green Tendencies | female | some university | 35 | New Taipei City | interviewees home |
| C | 771 | July 26, 2014 | Pan-blue tendencies | female | master’s | 43 | New Taipei City | cafe |
| D | 726 | July 30, 2014 | Pan-blue tendencies | Male | some high school | 60 | Taoyuan County | cafe |

Figure 3: Level of Support for Indirect Questions Detecting Partisan Orientation

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | Subject | Discriminates for Pan-Blue Supporters | Discriminates for Pan-Green Supporters |
| Media Exposure | At present the political commentary programs with the highest ratings in Taiwan are TVBS’s (channel 56) “2100 hei bai dui lun” [2100 Black and White] hosted by Luo Zhiqiang, and SETN News Station’s “Xin tai wan jia you” [Let’s Go New Taiwan] hosted by Liao Hsiao-chun. Which one would you watch if you could only choose one? |   |  |
| National Identity | When our sports teams compete in international events should they be referred to as “the Chinese team” or “the Taiwanese team”? (r8) |  |  |
| Would you rather our government use the name “Republic of China” or “Taiwan” when applying to membership in international organizations? |  |  |
| Position on Reunification Issue | Would you like this country to change its name to “Taiwan” or the “Republic of Taiwan” someday? |  |  |
| Would you like to see Taiwan and Mainland China reunite? |  |  |
| Cross-Strait Relations | At present our government is promoting economic and trade negotiations. Do you believe the government should be daring and proactive or cautious in these talks? |  |  |
| Political Symbolism | Do you support removing bronze statues of Chiang Kai-shek from public places as some people advocate? |  |  |
| Do you believe the park in Taipei commemorating Chiang Kai-shek should keep its present name of Freedom Square, or revert to its old name of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall? |  |  |
| Do you support some people’s view that the national flag should be changed because it contains the KMT emblem? |  |  |
| Some believe the verse in the national anthem which cites “Three principles of the people and the foundation of our party” is a reference to the KMT. Is this something you are concerned about? |  |  |
| Political Symbolism | Many people believe under the leadership of Cher Wang (hTC CEO) hTC is no longer a Taiwanese enterprise and call for a public boycott of the company. (Continued on next page) Do you agree? |  |  |
| Indirect Test for Partisan Support and Tendencies | Do you agree that the opposition party DPP should apologize for Taiwan’s present social disorder? |  |  |
| Do you agree that the ruling party KMT should apologize for Taiwan’s present social disorder? |  |  |
| Do you agree that president should apologize for Taiwan’s present social disorder? |  |  |
| Policy Views | Would you like to see Taiwan adopt a voluntary enlistment system for its military? |  |  |
| Voting Disposition and Choices | Which group of candidates did you vote for in the 2012 presidential election? |  |  |
| How much do you want the DPP (Pan-Green) to win a sweeping victory over the KMT (Pan-Blue do you want the DPP (Pan-Green) to win a large victory over the KMT (Pan-Blue)? ／How much do you want the KMT (Pan-Blue) to win a large victory over the DPP (Pan-Green)? |  |  |
| Our country requires a strong leader. What party should the president elected in 2016 be from? |  |  |

Note: Within the table, the circle represent questions which were relatively accurate in detecting partisan tendencies. Stars indicate questions which could not only discriminate for partisan supporters, but are also beneficial to differentiating between partisan supporters and closet partisans. Triangles indicate questions for which discrimination was slightly inaccurate. The X indicates the question was completely unable to discriminate for partisan tendencies.

1. For details, please see National Chengchi University Election Study Center, 2013, “Distribution of Trends Concerning Attitudes on Important Political Issues,”http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/modules/tinyd2/content/partyID.htm, date accessed: October 18, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. TVBS Poll Center, 2006, “Gao xiong shi chang hou xuan ren min diao,” [Survey Concerning Kaohsiung Mayoral Election Candidates], <http://home.tvbs.com.tw/static/FILE_DB/PCH/200610/davidkuo-20061018134423.pdf>, date accessed: September 9, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. TVBS Poll Center, 2014, “Taizhong shi zhang xuan qing min diao” [Taichung Mayoral Election Survey], <http://home.tvbs.com.tw/static/FILE_DB/PCH/201407/20140731201647333.pdf>, date accessed: September 9, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ETtoday Center for Politics, 2014, “Min diao/ tai zhong shi chang lan lù dui jue hu zhi qiang 44%, lin jia long 37%,” [Survey for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Face-off in Taichung Mayoral Election-Jason Hu 44%, Lin Chia-lung 37%], <http://www.ettoday.net/news/20140315/335178.htm#ixzz3CBNhhtUN>, date accessed: September 9, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Footnote 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Tai wan zhi biao min diao [Taiwan Indicators Survey Research Poll], 2014,http://www.tisr.com.tw/?page\_id=486, date accessed: January 1, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See Footnote 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Dong shen min diao yun [ETtoday], 2014, “Jue zhan zhong tai wan 2014 tai zhong zhang hua nan tou xian shi chang can xuan ren zhi chi du diao cha” [The Fight for Mid-Taiwan in 2014-Survey of Support for Mayoral and County Head Candidates for Taichung, Changhua, and Nantou] <http://www.ettoday.net/survey/survey.php?id=67>, date accessed: September 9, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Liu Kangyan, 2014, “Min diao/ zai zhang tou lan tian bian lǜ di lin jia long ying hu zhi qiang 28 ge bai fen dian” [Survey/Blue Skies for Pan-Green Camp as Lin Chia-lung Leads Jason Hu by 28 Points in Central Taiwan Elections], Dong shen xin wen yun [ETtoday], June 25, <http://www.ettoday.net/news/20140625/371413.htm>, date accessed: September32-14. We can see similar circumstances in ETtoday’s “ 2014 jue zhan liu du lan lǜ zhi chi du diao cha” [Support for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Candidates in 2014 Six City (Taipei, New Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung) Elections]. Of respondents, 54.28% saw themselves as “not leaning toward any party.” For Taoyuan mayor, 33.73% favored the DPP’s Cheng Wen-tsan, while 16.10% hoped the KMT’s Wu Chih-yang would win election. In addition, 38.19% responded “both are acceptable” or “I do not like either.” The headline of one July3 ETtoday report simply read “Liu du zhi zheng lan ying zhi sheng xin bei” [Only New Taipei City Holds Out Hope for the Pan-Blue Camp in Six City Elections]. This report completely neglected the possibility of closet partisans influencing partisan orientation distribution in its results. See: Dong shen min diao yun [ETtoday], 2014, “2014jue zhan liu du lan lǜ zhi chi du diao cha” [Support for Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Candidates in 2014 Six City Elections], <http://www.ettoday.net/survey/survey.php?id=69> , date accessed: September 9, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Same as Footnote 1. For example, a March 15, 2014 ETtoday report simply indicated: "There is only a gap of 7 percentage points between support levels for the 2 candidates. We can already anticipate a closely contested electoral battle in central Taiwan between the Pan-Blue and Pan-Green camps.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In response to the negative image of independent voters presented by Campbell and others, V.O. Key（1966, 7）asserts independent voters and those unaffiliated with any party, who show no interest in politics, are distinct. These two types of citizens are essentially different. Burnham (1970, 127-130) utilizes 1964 ANES data in his research and discovers a large percentage of independent voters among respondents with high levels of political activity who are high information voters. He therefore asserts independent voters can be divided into the classifications of “old independents,” those described in the American Voter as displaying low political participation and being low information voters, and “new independents” who show high levels of political participation and are high information voters. New independents are unwilling to make partisan commitments because they cannot choose between the two parties or because they are have misgivings concerning the present electoral and political structure, or the issue positions of candidates, according to Burnham. Overall, voters in Taiwan are certainly not new independent voters, while their behavior is mostly consistent with that of old independent voters (Chuang Tien-Lien 2001; Wang Jong-Tian 2010; Wu Shin-Chan 2010; Yu Chung-Wei 2012). We believe it is necessary to determine whether those previously classified as independent voters are pure independent voters or closet partisans prior to reclassifying voters based on interest in political participation and political activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This term was translated from Chinese by the author. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The citations that are not seen in the reference section are works written in Chinese that are available by request. Hong Yongtai (2014, 96-98) believes Taiwanese voters’ political ideology is composed of the following 4 voter positions: 1. Party preference including positive and negative affect. 2. Their like or dislike of bellwether politicians. 3. Identification as Taiwanese or Chinese. 4. Stance on unification issue with Mainland China. Hong asserts voters who have a particular leaning with respect to the above listed positions cannot be called independents. That is, in addition to not favoring any party, true independents must also be neutral with respect to the other 3 issue positions and not have any personal preferences. We exclude the second issue position concerning like or dislike of bellwether politicians, as we fear respondents might answer this question based on their feelings toward particular candidates rather than parties. Therefore, we leave out “President Ma Ying-jeou” and simply use the term “the president” in the questionnaire. We take into consideration Chuang Shu-Mei and Hong Yongtai’s (2011) notion of “specific negative party identification” in designing our questionnaire. After asking traditional questions of partisan orientation, they follow up with this question: “Among the various parties in Taiwan, including the KMT, DPP, New Party, People First Party, Taiwan Solidarity Union, etc., that you would not vote for under any circumstances?” However, this study does not utilize such questions, as it emphasizes indirect questions (and not opposition questions). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. We considered adding questions concerning ethnic identity such as “In our (Taiwanese) society there are people who consider themselves Taiwanese and those who consider themselves Chinese, as well as people who consider themselves both. Do you see yourself as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both?” However, as many as 30% of respondents chose the answer “both” in telephone interviews, we determined this question was unbeneficial in discriminating for partisan orientation, and it was not included in overall calculations. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See: Chen Yalan, 2010, “Wang xue hong: HTC shi zhong guo ren chuang li de pin pai” [Cher Wang: HTC is a Brand Created by Chinese People], *Jing ji ri bao* [Economic Daily], July 27, [http://edn.udn.com/news/view.jsp?aid=297745&cid=47#](http://edn.udn.com/news/view.jsp?aid=297745&cid=47), date accessed: December 3, 2014. NOWnews, 2012, “HTC chi ding tai wan ren? liang wen jie: zhe yang de qi ye, ting ta gan ma?” [Does HTC Have the Taiwanese People’s Number? Liang Wen-chie: What Are We Supporting this Company for?], August 20<http://www.nownews.com/n/2012/08/20/175613>, date accessed: December 3, 2014. *Tai wan li bao* [Lihpao Daily], 2012, “Bai xuan guai zui wang xue hong, wei bi you li” [Should Cher Wang Be Blamed for the Electoral Loss?], January 18, <http://mag.chinareviewnews.com/doc/1019/8/4/3/101984336.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=101984336>, date retrieved: December 3, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Hsieh Wen-Hua and Chang Wen-Chuang, 2007, “Da zhong zhi zheng zai jian zi you guang chang ji gua pai [Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Renamed Today], *Zi you ri bao* [Freedom Times][http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2007/new/dec/8/today-fo4.htm, December 8, date accessed: October 17, 2013](http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2007/new/dec/8/today-fo4.htm%2C%20December%208%2C%20date%20accessed%3A%20October%2017%2C%202013). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Lee Hung-Tien, 2004, “A bian ti chu dang hui shuo luan le qin zhong chen jiao” [Pro-China Factions Angry at Chen’s Criticism of Ambiguity Between KMT and National Emblem], <http://www.southnews.com.tw/polit/polit_00/polit_09/01204.htm>, date accessed: December 16, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See: *Zhong ping she* [China Review News], 2007 “Ma ying jiu tui jun shi zheng ce: que bao tai ha wu zhan shi” [Ma Ying-jeou’s Military Policy: to Ensure There Is no War in the Taiwan Strait], *Zhong guo ping lun xin wen wang* [China Review News], <http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1004/4/1/1/100441143.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=100441143，2007年9月2>, date accessed: December 30, 2013. Lin Hsin-Fang and Luo Tianbin, 2013, “Mu bing lan tan zi jian wei yu ma bie nong gei xia ren” [Control Yuan Urges Ma not to Leave Military Conscription Problem to Next President], Zi you ri bao [Liberty Times], <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/741373>, December 25, date accessed: December 30, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For a detailed account of frequency distribution, refer to Appendix 1: <http://cl.ly/120t3o1n321u> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. This ratio is higher than the approximately 50% for closet partisans in common public opinion surveys. One primary reason for this is that we first ask the question concerning traditional partisan orientation in order to get the respondent’s most intuitive answer without the influence of other follow-up questions of partisanship. There is a strong possibility that, when respondents are asked about partisan orientation at the outset, they may become more conservative or defensive in their answers. As most of the items in the questionnaire are concerned with partisan orientation, it is difficult to avoid respondents refusing to continue answering questions in the middle of the interview or not answer all of the questions completely. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. For the sake of conciseness, and in order to focus on the conclusions of later steps, we do not display the table showing cross analysis and binary logistic regression results from this step (Step 3) here. If required, you may request this table from the authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. While the tangent point is subjectively determined in the integral distribution figure, the goal is not to choose a fixed or absolute tangent point, but rather to confirm that this integral distribution graph can be adopted in observing closet partisan distribution after confirming it can detect for Pan-Green tendencies. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For an interview overview refer to Appendix 2:<http://cl.ly/1g2W3X1R0B0G>. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Participants in the further interviews were those who hid their Pan-Blue leanings while agreeing to be contacted again (identification numbers 71, 119, 225, 660, 726, 736, 77, 885, 892, 987, 1011, 1039, 12 total) and those who hid their Pan-Green tendencies while agreeing to be contacted again (identification numbers 48, 180, 189, 250, 263, 285, 292, 366, 513, 525, 536, 563, 580, 592, 761, 784, 794, 932, 1000, 1021，20 in total). There were 2 (identification numbers 314, 1002) respondents who had Pan-Blue or Pan-Green partisan leanings and agreed to be contacted, but for whom it was not possible to determine partisan orientation (integral of 0). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)