Communication Networks and Changes in Electoral Choices: A Study of Taiwan's 2002 Mayoral Elections

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Communication networks play an important role in the process of political socialization. This article, based on Taiwan's 2002 Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral election data, investigates the extent to which political discussion with family and close friends affects changes in vote choices. Using two definitions of changes in vote choice—vote switching and partisan defection—the empirical findings support Alan Zuckerman and his followers' structural theory and partially sustain Paul Beck's social support theory. First, partisan voters in both cities who perceive great heterogeneity in their communication networks are likely to switch their vote in two consecutive elections. Second, partisan voters in Kaohsiung who frequently discuss politics within communication networks are not likely to defect their party identification. The implications of the findings for the development of deliberative democracy are discussed.

KEYWORDS: partisan defection, vote switching, communication networks, voter preferences, political disagreement

In the months leading up to the Taiwanese presidential election of 2004, election commentators were nearly unanimous in predicting the victory of the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party or KMT) and the People First Party (PFP) and their "dream team" of nominees Lien Chang and James Soong. To the surprise of the pundits, the KMT was defeated by the slate of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which included the incumbents Chen Sui-bian and Annette Lu. KMT had dominated Taiwanese politics before 2000 and, even though the DPP won in 2000, more voters identified themselves as members of the KMT than any other party in the months leading up to the 2004 elec-

tion. The DPP victory of 2000 had appeared to be a blip on the radar screen, which was expected to be washed away by the restoration of the KMT in 2004, but it was not to be.

A research team provides a sociological perspective to explain the microfoundations of vote changes, "no matter the importance of beliefs and understanding of citizens, political preferences respond to patterns of social interaction and to the social contexts of people's lives."[1] The sources of influence on voter preferences (e.g., the issues discussed in a campaign, the personalities of the candidates, and their historical records) enter the political awareness of individual voters through a variety of paths, but they are always mediated by social interaction within communication networks (i.e., family, friends, and/or colleagues with whom we discuss politics).

According to this perspective, the "blip" in 2000 scattered DPP voters throughout various social networks, increasing the support for its views in various contexts. Although it is possible for individuals in their social networks to resist change and to reenforce older lines of opinion, it is also possible for the reverse to happen.[2] The KMT's defeat in 2004 reflects the fact that the DPP was gaining support in both the south and the north. In social networks that were dominated by the KMT before 2000, a sprinkling of DPP supporters was sufficient to sow the seeds of further change. On the other hand, where the DPP was already established, its newly converted supporters were encouraged and supported by their newly like-minded neighbors.

In this article, I define *changes in vote choices* with two concepts: partisan defection (i.e., voting against one's current party identification) and vote switching (i.e., voting against one's choice in the last mayoral election). These two concepts or definitions are consistent with the two theories about vote changes I examine: a structural theory of vote choice and a social support theory of partisan defection.

Survey data gathered in the 2002 mayoral elections of Taipei and Kaohsiung offers support for a set of simple contentions about the process of social interaction and political change. A higher degree of political disagreement perceived within communication networks leads to partisan defection (i.e., voting for a candidate nominated by the opposite political party at the end of a campaign season) and vote switching (i.e., voting for a candidate of a party in the previous election but voting for a candidate of the opposite party in the current election). With limitations, the findings suggest that the sociological approach helps explain that the DPP's victory in 2004 would not be such a great surprise. This attempt to use the sociological approach to explain vote choices sheds

light on the current discussions about deliberative democracy and provides reflections on the limitations of rational choices. It also contributes to the development of theories of social networks and perspectives about strengthening democracy.

Taipei and Kaohsiung are two political centers of Taiwan. Taipei, in the north, is in the region that has been dominated by the KMT since World War II. Kaohsiung is in the south, where the other parties, especially the DPP, have been growing in popularity among voters. A conventional wisdom is that there is a North-South difference in political culture, but little research focuses on the North-South difference in voting behavior. This article shows no distinct North-South difference with regard to partisan defection in 2002. However, it shows that partisan voters in Kaohsiung who pay great attention to TV news are less likely to switch their vote (i.e., their votes in 2004 were consistent with their vote in the 1998 mayoral election) than their counterparts paying little attention to TV news.

The next section reviews how discussing politics within communication networks affects changes in vote choices. It summarizes the variables to be used for model construction. The third section formulates two hypotheses, discusses the measurements of the variables, and evaluates the datasets. The fourth section reports the results of logistic analysis. The final section discusses the implications of the findings and points out limitations to overcome in future research.

The Literature of Communication Network Effects on Vote Choices

This section reviews the literature accounting for vote changes. The first subsection outlines three aspects of communication network effects: incongruence between a voter's party identification and that of fellow network members, the frequency of interaction with communication networks, and the interaction with other types of networks. The second subsection summarizes the other variables accounting for the changes of vote choices.[3]

Effects of Communication Networks on Voting Stability and Partisan Defection

In 1944, Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University published *The People's Choice*.

That book founded the sociological approach to study voting behavior. In the 1960s and 1970s, the sociological approach did not garner as much attention as the so-called rational choice school or the Michigan school's political psychology approach that emphasizes individual attributes.[4] In the 1980s, the Columbia school regained attention. The Columbia school of electoral studies proposes that social context (i.e., the variables and settings external to personal calculus) plays the critical role in shaping voters' preferences. Individuals create their own social networks based on individual choices of partners and on intersections "between the externally imposed social context and the citizens' own exogenous preference."[5] It encourages scholars to take into account various aspects of contextual effects, such as the backgrounds of network members, the types of networks, and the way an individual interacts with fellow network members. Inspired by the three approaches of electoral studies, recent models of voting behavior tend to include sociological, psychological, and contextual variables.

Interpersonal communication about politics has been recognized as a form of political participation.[6] Scholars have found that interacting with communication networks influences political involvement.[7] Such interaction will lead people to attend public forums and to respond to local policy changes.[8] Studies also show that messages with personal relevance that are presented by a trusted source are more likely to be accepted.[9] The impact of networks is mitigated by the tendency to talk to like-minded others, mostly family members.[10]

The heterogeneity of communication networks and the perception of incongruence. Studies on social network influence on voting choices include the following three perspectives: the perception of heterogeneity in network members' backgrounds, the frequency of discussing politics, and interaction with other types of networks. First and most importantly, the perception of the congruity with respect to party identification explains the stability of one's voting choices. Alan Zuckerman and his colleagues studied British elections (1964–1966, 1966–1970, and 1970–1974) and US elections (1956–1960) and proposed *a structural theory of voting choice*, suggesting that when voters interact with network members that have similar party identification and similar social backgrounds (such as class, ethnicity, and religion), the voters are likely to be consistent in their voting choices in adjacent elections.[11] Charles Pattie and Ron Johnston's studies on British elections and James Liu's study on New Zealand and Japan also support this theory.[12]

While Zuckerman and colleagues' theory deals with vote switching, Paul Beck's thesis of social support aims to deal with partisan defection, another format of changes in vote choices. Based on the US 1992 presidential election data, his models suggest that the perception of heterogeneity in communication network members' voting preferences will increase the likelihood of partisan defection. Most partisan voters do not defect, because they perceive support from network members' party identification. He argues that communication networks affect both partisan and nonpartisan voters; such communication network influence is even stronger than partisanship. As he concludes, "Among partisans, defections to the opposition party's candidate were more likely in the absence of discussant network support for their own party's candidate and the presence of discussants favoring the opposition."[13]

The interaction with other types of networks. The second perspective of network influence is individuals' interaction with other types of networks. Political discussion networks can be merely one of many types in one's political life. A voter's political campaign network may not overlap the political discussion network. Zuckerman his colleagues' suggest that political party networks and social class networks are important variables of voting stability. They found that involvement in partisan activities, which implies interaction with people with similar party identification, and interaction with middle-class people increase the likelihood of voting stability. This social class network effect is found in the United States but not in Britain.[14] In the United States, the more interaction with the middle class, the lower the likelihood of vote switching. Additionally, the ethnic-religious network is also a statistically significant factor of voting stability.[15] Therefore, in a study of social networks, it is necessary to include one or more other types of network as alternative explanatory variables. Other variables suggested by the literature are summarized in the next subsection.

The frequency of discussing politics. The third aspect of communication network effect is the frequency of discussing politics. Frequent interaction with like-minded people bolsters personal opinions, stabilizes attitudes, reduces changing voting preferences, and encourages voting in the same direction. Frequent discussion on a given issue helps construct attitudinal consistency on the issue.[16]

The other studies show negative evidence. Zuckerman and colleagues maintain that the frequency of discussion is contingent on the characteristics of discussants and networks. The frequency of interac-

tion and the amount of information being exchanged between individuals do *not* matter very much in terms of maintaining the consistency of voting preferences between individuals and their discussants. They suggest that what matters is the social and political homogeneity or cohesion of individuals' "social intimates," including the homogeneity in class identification (working class or middle class), union membership, religion, and marital status.[17] A recent work on the lasting of political disagreement also corresponds to Zuckerman and colleagues' argument: that the frequency of discussing politics within communication networks should not really matter, unless there is diversity in the network that can lend support to diverse opinions.[18] In short, the frequency should not have independent and direct effect on voting choices; its effect depends on the heterogeneity of communication networks.

Hypotheses, Variable Measurements, Ïand the Datasets

Hypotheses

The literature suggests that homogeneous communication networks stabilize changes in vote choices. As changes in vote choices can refer to vote switching that occurs in two consecutive elections, or partisan defection that occurs during a campaign season, I formulate two hypotheses (and therefore two models) accordingly. First, *the more incongruence in party preference a voter perceives, the more likely he or she will vote for a candidate from the party against the party he or she voted for in the previous election*. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between perceived incongruence and vote switching; the alternative hypothesis is that such incongruence decreases the likelihood of vote switching. Second, *the more incongruence in party pref - erence a voter perceives, the more likely he or she will vote for a can - didate against his or her own party identification*. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between perceived incongruence and partisan defection, while the alternative hypothesis is that such incongruence decreases the likelihood of partisan defection.

Models and Variable Measurements

Because this article uses two definitions of vote changes, vote switching and partisan defection, I construct two models for each definition. The model of vote switching is based on Zuckerman's theory of vote

stability; the model of partisan defection is based on Beck's social support theory. Both models, according to Zuckerman's and Beck's original models, have communication network variables (i.e., incongruence with communication network members in party preference, interaction with political party networks, and frequency of discussing politics). I also include in both models the following control variables: attention to the news media, partisan strength, voting stability, and vote choice in the 2000 presidential election. The following paragraphs provide more information about measurements of the variables.

The dependent variable of Model 1, the first measurement of vote changes, is vote switching. The coding of +1 denotes inconsistent vote choice from the last mayoral election (1998) to the 2002 election, while 0 is denoted for consistent voting. The dependent variable of Model 2, the second measurement of vote change, is partisan defection. The coding of +1 denotes voting for a candidate from the opposite political party and 0 denotes voting for a candidate of the same political party. Note that this way of coding works in democracies of a two-party system, but it excludes a significant number of observations in democracies with multiple political parties. It will neglect two situations—that smaller political parties do no have candidates, and that in Taiwan's 2002 mayoral elections, only two major political parties (KMT and DPP) nominated candidates. Hence, supporters of other political parties need to vote for a candidate from the same political camp or from the opposite camp. Therefore, I add one other coding scheme for partisan defection: partisan defection is coded 1 for voting for a candidate from the opposite political camp and 0 for voting for a candidate from the same political camp.

The three explanatory variables used in both models include incongruence with communication network in party preference, political party network, and the frequency of discussing politics. First, *incongruence with communication network in party preference* has two values, –1 and +1: –1 denotes perceiving homogeneous party identification within communication networks, while +1 denotes perceiving high incongruence. Second, *political party network,* an index, ranging from 0 to 3, measures the likelihood and the extent to which a person will interact with party activists. Third, *the frequency of discussing politics*, an ordinal variable ranging from 1 to 4, measures how frequently (from low to high) a respondent interacts with his or her communication network.

Both models have the following four control variables: partisan strength, attention to the news media, voting stability, and voting experiences in the most recent election. The literature suggests two lists of variables that account for changes in vote choices: social context vari-

ables (including heterogeneity of communication networks, frequency of discussion politics, interaction with political party networks and social class networks, and attention to the news media);[19] and political-psychological variables (including the perception of social support, partisan strength, perceptions of dominance parties, subjective evaluation of candidates, and retrospective views about economy status).[20] Indeed, it is impractical and unnecessary to include all these variables in the models. Hence, in order to control for voters' experiences and their political interest, I chose the four control variables. First, *partisan strength* measures the extent to which the respondent is partisan-minded (1 for a little bit, 2 for somewhat, and 3 for strongly feel inclined toward a political party). I include this variable because strong partisanship is conventionally regarded as a long-lasting and consistent stabilizer of voting choices. The stronger a voter's partisanship, the less likely he or she is to switch votes in consecutive elections. Second, I include *attention to the mass media* in the models because news media are an important source of political information alternative to communication networks. This variable is a dummy one, where 1 denotes paying attention to TV news reports on the election and 0 otherwise. Third, *voting stability* measures the respondent's voting stability in the past two adjacent elections: 1 for voting for the same political party in 1994 and 1998; 0 otherwise. Fourth, a voter's most recent voting experience is measured by respondents' vote choice in the 2000 presidential election: 1 for voting for DPP; 0 otherwise.

The additional control variables for the model of partisan defection, according Beck's original model, include retrospective view of economic status, favorable evaluation of the incumbent, and favorable evaluation of the challenger. *The evaluation of current economy status* measures how the respondents see the economy status quo compared to the precious year (–1 for "worse," 0 for "about the same," and 1 for "better"). *Favorable evaluation of the incumbent performance* is an index from 0 to +3, based on a respondent's general evaluations of the incumbent's performance, past governing performance of the opposing party, and fitness for the job. *Favorable evaluation of the challenger* is a dichotomous variable, measuring a respondent's perception of the challenger's fitness for the job (1 for positive evaluation and 0 otherwise).

Data

The datasets used for this study are Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) for the Taipei mayoral election (N = 1,216) and

the Kaohsiung mayoral election (N = 1,227) in 2002.[21] Election day was December 7, 2002, and the survey was conducted from August 1, 2002, to April 31, 2003. The variables and questionnaire are exactly the same across the two survey datasets.

Taiwan is a proper case for examining theories of partisan defection for four reasons. First, in general, Taiwanese voters involve themselves in political and governmental issues. For example, the voting turnout rates in the 2001 and 2002 elections are over 70 percent; 45 percent of voters during the 2001 congressional election (TEDS 2001) and 50 percent of voters in the 2002 city mayoral elections (TEDS 2002) report that they sometimes discuss politics. Second, Taiwanese voters have a high degree of freedom to choose resources of political information. This environment makes Taiwan an appropriate case for studying selective exposure to multiple news sources. Third, elections and voting have become a routine part of the life of Taiwanese voters. Before the survey for the 2002 mayoral elections, most adult Taiwanese voters have directly elected their president for two terms and their congressional legislators for three terms. Additionally, partisan defection is likely to occur in Taiwan, because Taiwan has a tradition of "voting for the person, not the party."[22] Fourth, Taiwan is moving closer to a two-party system. The match between voter ideology and the offerings of the parties inspires voter party attachments. Currently the six political parties are aligning into two major political camps or coalitions by national identity; the other smaller extreme political parties are being marginalized. The difference between the two political camps is more a matter of image than substantive difference. Both acknowledge the legitimacy of the Republic of China (ROC) against the People's Republic of China (PRC); the key difference is in the two camps' strategic approaches to the problem of defining the status quo.[23]

Using TEDS 2002 for this study has two advantages. First, many variables in TEDS 2002 correspond to, or can be arranged to match, both Zuckerman and his colleagues' social structure theory of voting choice and Beck's social support thesis. Second, the two parallel datasets allow a researcher to compare the difference between Taipei voters and Kaohsiung voters in terms of vote switching and partisan defection.

Note that a number of important variables about communication networks and the control variables suggested by the literature are not available in TEDS 2002, including the size of networks, the details of discussants' political background, economical and residential stability, and ways of evaluating candidates and political parties.[24]

Findings and Analysis

Because the dependent variable is dichotomous, the analysis requires logistic regression and maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. This section begins with an examination of the data, showing that the set of voters to which the first measurement applies does not overlap the set of voters to which the second measurement applies. This comparison implies that we need to use multiple measurements to study changes in vote choices. This approach leads to the following results: (1) Taipei voters who perceive incongruence within a communication network are likely to switch their votes and defect from their party identification; Kaohsiung voters who perceive this incongruence are likely to defect; (2) Taipei voters who frequently discuss politics are less likely to defect from their party identification.

The Difference Between the Two
Measurements of Changes in Vote Choices

This article uses two measurements for vote changes: vote switching and partisan defection. In Taipei, 13.3 percent of partisan voters switched their votes, and 6.4 percent defected from their party identification. In Kaohsiung, 17.1 percent of partisan voters in Kaohsiung are switchers and 8.1 percent are partisan defectors. The analysis below suggests that it is better policy to use multiple measurements than one measurement for the regression analysis because the set of vote switchers does not exactly overlap partisan defectors. In Taipei, 73.7 percent of the defectors are switchers, while only 35.4 percent of the switchers are defectors. Similarly, in Kaohsiung, 58.1 percent of the defectors are switchers, and only 27.5 percent of the switchers are defectors.

If partisan defectors are the same as vote switchers, it is sufficient to use either one as the measurement for the changes of vote choices. But as Table 1 shows, partisan defectors are not necessarily vote switchers. The first column shows that there is little difference between KMT and DPP identifiers with respect to the percentage of vote switching within a city. However, the percentages of partisan defectors differ across the parties and the cities. As the second column of Table 2 shows, in Taipei, DPP identifiers' defection rate is higher (10.1) than that of KMT identifiers (2.3), while in Kaohsiung, the defection rate of DPP identifiers is lower (3.6) than that of KMT identifiers (8.3). The difference between the two measurements suggest that using only one measurement of vote choice will not provide the whole picture. There-

Table 1   Switch and Defection Rate in Taipei and Kaohsiung by Party Identification

	Switch Rate (%)	Defection Rate (%)
Taipei		
KMT identifiers	11.3	2.3
DPP identifiers	13	10.1
Kaohsiung		
KMT identifiers	15.4	8.3
DPP identifiers	15.1	3.6

Source: Taiwan Election and Democratization Study, 2002

fore, the analysis of changes in vote choices needs to rely on both measurements. The dependent variable *changes in vote choices* will be specified to vote switching and partisan defection.

Communication Networks and Vote Switching

Table 2 reports the logistic regression results for vote switching. The dependent variable for this first study is vote switching. I replicate Zuckerman and colleagues' models and present them in the models Taipei A and Kaohsiung A.[25] The results agree with their argument that voters who perceive a difference in their communication network members' party identification are more likely to switch their votes against their past vote choices. The estimated patterns of the influence of political party networks in Taipei and Kaohsiung on vote switching are similar in sign and magnitude to what Zuckerman and colleagues found in Britain.

In the models Taipei B and Kaohsiung B, additional variables are added. Besides the significant influence of the perceived incongruence within communication networks, the statistically significant coefficients shown in the model Kaohsiung B indicate three features of Kaohsiung voters: they are more likely to switch their votes (1) if they pay less attention to TV news, (2) if they have some prior experiences of voting for different political parties, or (3) if they have higher education levels. The first feature implies that Kaohsiung voters are more selective in TV news than are Taipei voters. This difference does not suggest that electoral campaigns do not matter in Taipei. Note that the variable *attention to TV election* is not a measure for the exact effect of campaigns but a measure of selective perception. Therefore, one will see that partisan voters in Kaohsiung are more selective in perceiving

Table 2　Communication Networks, Political Discussion, and Vote Switching Between 1998 and 2002 Mayoral Elections

Explanatory variables	Taipei A		Taipei B		Kaohsiung A		Kaohsiung B	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.
(Intercept)	-1.489***	0.24	-0.674	1.69	-1.533***	0.24	-0.863	1.48
Incongruence with communication network members in party preference	0.323*	0.18	0.473*	0.23	0.401*	0.16	0.540*	0.27
Interacting with political party networks	-0.420*	0.17	-0.053	0.32	-0.162	0.15	0.443	0.34
The frequency of discussing the election	—	—	-0.097	0.37	—	—	-0.573	0.42
Partisan strength	—	—	-0.603+	0.32	—	—	0.038	0.36
Attention to TV election news	—	—	-0.247	0.60	—	—	-1.445*	0.68
Voting stability, 1994–1998	—	—	0.129	0.48	—	—	-1.002*	0.47
Voted for DPP in the 2000 presidential election	—	—	0.372	0.46	—	—	0.244	0.45
Education level	—	—	0.041	0.12	—	—	0.286*	0.12
Income	—	—	-0.057	0.09	—	—	-0.146	0.09
AIC	246.45		182.16		191.75		157.50	
N	531		267		451		194	

Source: Taiwan Election and Democratization Study, 2002.
Note: The incumbent Taipei mayor's party is KMT; the incumbent Kaohsiung mayor's party is DPP.
*p < .1 ***p < .001. <AU: **Confirm * and *****>

election TV news than partisan voters in Taipei. The second feature implies that past voting experiences matter in stabilizing Kaohsiung voters' choices. Last, contrasted to their Taipei counterparts, partisan voters in Kaohsiung who have higher education levels are more open to changes in their votes. The following reports about partisan defection also support this difference.

Communication Networks and Partisan Defection

Unlike *vote switching,* which emphasizes the consistency of vote choices over time, *partisan defection* refers to voting against an individual's party identification. Table 3 shows the results based on the two measurements of partisan defection: defecting from a specific political party and defecting from a political camp. Models Taipei A and Kaohsiung A use the first measurement of partisan defection and consider only KMT and DPP identifiers, while Taipei B and Kaohsiung B use the second measurement and focus on identifiers of the two political camps, including identifiers of IP and TSU, whose national identification are consistent with DPP (categorized as the Green camp), and the identifiers of PFP and NP whose national identification are consistent with KMT (the Blue camp).

Using two measurements for partisan defection makes little difference. The results of regressions using the second measurement correspond to those using the first measurement. Additionally, partisan defectors in Taiwan mainly come from the two major political parties, KMT and DPP.

Table 3 shows that Taipei voters who seldom discuss the election are more likely to change their vote choices. As the models Taipei A and Taipei B suggest, for Taipei voters the relationship between frequent discussion and the likelihood of partisan defection is negative and statistically significant. If we compare the coefficients of the variable *fre - quency of discussing the election* across Table 2 and Table 3, we see that political discussion during the campaign season increases the likelihood of partisan defection but does not increases the likelihood of vote switching. Although this finding does not suggest a distinct North-South difference, it is clear that discussing election is an important aspect of Taipei voters' political life during a campaign season, and that Taipei voters are very likely to align their voting choices with their party identification though political discussion. Moreover, the models Kaohsiung A and Kaohsiung B in both Table 2 and Table 3 suggest that the interaction with communication networks influence Kaohsiung voters and

Table 3   Communication Networks, Political Discussion, and Partisan Defection in the 2002 Taipei and Kaohsiung Mayoral Elections

Explanatory variables	DPP Identifiers Voted for KMT or KMT Identifiers Voted for DPP				Green Camp Identifiers Voted for KMT or Blue Camp Identifiers Voted for DPP			
	Taipei A		Kaohsiung A		Taipei B		Kaohsiung B	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.
(Intercept)	0.440	3.11	-22.790	1678.00	3.161	3.31	-22.517	1614.63
Incongruence with communication network members in party preference	-0.143	0.36	1.072+	0.59	-0.225	0.34	1.070+	0.59
Interaction with political party networks	-0.416	0.67	-0.634	0.73	-0.618	0.69	-0.624	0.71
Frequency of discussing the election	-1.150+	0.67	-0.006	0.67	-1.745*	0.72	-0.059	0.68
Partisan strength	-1.334*	0.59	0.249	0.68	-1.331*	0.55	0.132	0.65
Attention to TV election news	0.270	1.00	15.490	1678.00	-0.141	0.97	15.477	1614.63
Retrospective view about economic status	0.263	0.57	0.563	0.62	0.475	0.56	0.435	0.57
Favorable evaluation of the incumbent	0.477	0.42	0.312	0.54	0.385	0.42	0.062	0.48
Favorable evaluation of the challenger	-0.557	0.81	-0.735	1.27	-1.017	0.82	-0.761	1.21
Voting stability, 1994–1998	-0.668	0.89	1.496	1.30	-0.464**	0.87	1.305	1.19
Voted for DPP in the 2000 presidential election	2.383*	0.99	-0.798	1.06	3.036	1.03	-0.243	0.93
Education level	0.139	0.16	0.426*	0.21	0.071	0.16	0.449*	0.23
AIC	90.245		78.83		95.299		81.115	
N	203		165		245		181	

Source: Taiwan Election and Democratization Study, 2002
Note: The incumbent Taipei mayor's party is KMT; the incumbent Kaohsiung mayor's party is DPP.
+*p* < .1 **p* < .05 ***p* < .01

their perception of diversity in their communication networks is very likely to make them change their vote choices.

Conclusion and Discussion

Discussing politics within communication networks is an important aspect of an individual's political life, but how it influences voter preferences remains undiscovered. An ideal picture of a deliberative democracy is that the greater the involvement in political discussion, the more likely voters will become open-minded and free from the constraints of partisanship. The finding of this article, based on the 2002 mayoral election in Taiwan, preliminarily challenges this perspective.

Both theories examined in this article address how interacting with communication networks influences the changes in vote choice; but they differ from each other with different definitions about vote changes. Zuckerman and his colleagues' structural theory of vote choice focuses on vote switching (the changes in vote preference between two elections), whereas Beck's social support theory focuses on partisan defection (the change of vote preference during the campaign season).

The theories suggest the circumstances under which the ideal of deliberative democracy can be possible. The results of this study, which correspond to previous findings, show that during the Taiwan 2002 mayoral election, the structural theory of vote choices explains Taipei and Kaohsiung voters' behavior of vote switching, while the social support theory (with weak statistical significance) explains Kaohsiung voters' behavior of partisan defection.

This study also suggests that frequently discussing politics can influence the stability of vote choices. For Taipei partisan voters, discussing politics frequently decreases the likelihood of partisan defection. This implies that Taipei partisan voters who interact frequently with their communication networks are more likely to strengthen their existing vote preferences.

I acknowledge that these findings are tentative and require more investigation. The evidence is not very strong, and the North-South differences may not be robust. However, these preliminary findings raise a concern about whether the involvement in political discussion leads to open-minded voters who base their vote choices on rational evaluation of the quality of candidates and their stances on policy issues. Especially when partisan voters have fewer chances to, or subjectively choose not to, perceive political disagreement within their life, they are

likely to remain partisan-minded. All these suggest that individuals are not always rational decisionmakers in an election. In Taiwan, the perception of the level of political disagreement within communication networks constrains voters' choices.

The findings of this study apply to partisan voters only. To further examine if discussing politics within communication networks makes voters more partisan-minded, future research needs to take into account the following issues about operationalization of *changes in vote choices*. First, the two definitions do not capture the situations where voters are becoming more open-minded or more narrow-minded during a campaign season. Second, the definitions do not show whether a strong supporter of political party X becomes less supportive. In other words, an individual's vote choice that is coded as 1 or 0 does not reflect the extent to which that voter becomes more open-minded and ready for change. Third, by the two definitions, nonpartisan voters are excluded.[26] Moreover, partisan defection excludes the situations where, for example, voters change from partisan voters to absent voters, change from independent voters to partisan voters, or change from partisan voters to voters casting waste ballots.

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Notes

    1. Alan S. Zuckerman, Laurence A. Kotler-Berkowitz, and Lucas A. Swaine, "Anchoring Political Preferences: The Structural Bases of Stable Electoral Decisions and Political Attitudes in Britain," *European Journal of Polit ical Research* 33, no. 3 (1998): 285–321, 285.
    2. Robert Huckfeldt, Paul E. Johnson, and John D. Sprague, *Political Dis agreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions Within Communication Net works* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

3. In this article, I use "communication networks" rather than "social networks" because the meaning of "communication networks" is more specific than "social networks." A social network can refers to communication networks or other types of networks, such as political party networks and social class networks, while a communication network clearly refers to networks composed of members subjectively chosen by an individual as political discussion partners. The term "communication networks" is a synonym for "political communication networks," "interpersonal communication networks," "discussion networks" and "political discussion networks" appearing in other studies.

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17. Zuckerman, Kotler-Berkowitz, and Swaine, "Anchoring Political Preferences."

18. Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague, *Political Disagreement*..

19. See Stephen Coleman, "The Effect of Social Conformity on Collective Voting Behavior," *Political Analysis* 12, no. 1 (2004): 76–96; Pattie and Johnston, "Political Talk and Voting"; Pattie and Johnston, "Talk as a Political Context"; Pattie and Johnston, "People Who Talk Together Vote Together"; Pattie and Johnston, "Context, Conversation and Conviction"; Zuckerman, Kotler-Berkowitz, and Swaine, "Anchoring Political Preferences"; Liu, Ikeda, and Wilson, "Interpersonal Environment Effects on Political Preferences"; Burbank, "Explaining Contextual Effects on Vote Choice." .

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21. Data analyzed in this article were collected by the research projects of TEDS 2002, and directed by Chi Huang. Public Opinion Survey Center, National Chung-Cheng University, is responsible for the data distribution. The

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22. For the discussion of the American value of "voting for the person, not the party," see Beck, "Encouraging Political Defection."

23. The Blue camp is composed of Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party or KMT) and other parties separated from it—New Party (NP) and People First Party (PFP). Their supporters hold that the Republic of China (ROC) exists legitimately in Taiwan and should pursue a democratic reunification with the People's Republic China (PRC) in mainland China. The green camp is composed of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the current dominant political party; Taiwan Solidification Union (TSU); and the Independence Party (IP). Supporters of the green camp emphasize more the difference between Taiwan and (mainland) China than the difference between PRC and ROC. They argue that, because the legitimacy of ROC in Taiwan has been vanishing worldwide since the KMT lost the civil war, there is a need for this island to give Taiwan an internationally acknowledged identity.

24. Beck, "Encouraging Political Defection"; Burbank, "Explaining Contextual Effects on Vote Choice" ; Stephen Coleman, "The Effect of Social Conformity on Collective Voting Behavior," *Political Analysis* 12, no. 1 (2004): 76-96; Fournier, Blais, Nadeau, Gidengil , and Nevitte, "Issue Importance and Performance Voting."

25. Zuckerman, Kotler-Berkowitz, and Swaine, "Anchoring Political Preferences," 294.

26. Indeed, focusing on partisan voters and omitting independent/swing voters constraints the inference of the findings. However, the findings help future research to explore the influence of the same variables on nonpartisan voters. If perceiving heterogeneous party identification and discussing politics frequently have certain influence on partisan voters, will they influence independent voters even more than partisan voters?