

Young Taiwanese People's Ethnic Identity and Stance on Independence vs. Unification: Regulating Effects of China's Favorable Measures Toward Taiwanese

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between ethnic identity, the unification-independence stance, and China's favorable measures among young Taiwanese individuals. It finds that there is a negative relationship between ethnic identity and the unification-independence stance, meaning that those with a stronger Taiwanese identity are more likely to support independence. However, China's favorable measures have a positive relationship with the unification-independence stance, indicating that they can influence young Taiwanese individuals to be more supportive of unification. The study also reveals that China's favorable measures strengthen the positive influence of ethnic identity on the unification-independence stance. Overall, the findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of political stances among young Taiwanese individuals, which can be influenced by factors such as economic opportunities, cultural exchanges, and educational cooperation with China. The study suggests further research to explore these relationships in more depth and to consider individual differences and temporal changes. Additionally, it recommends studying the impact of cross-cultural exchanges and conducting comparative research in cross-national contexts to gain a broader understanding of young people's political attitudes.

Keywords: naturally independent, naturally for unification, favorable measures toward Taiwanese, ethnic identity, rational choice

1. Introduction

Taiwan and China embarked on unprecedented interactions at both the government and private-sector levels after Taiwan lifted its Martial Law and China opened its door for reforms in 1979. Research and discussions on cross-strait identity have since become a deep topic for the development of cross-strait relations. The term “naturally dependent” emerged in Taiwan society immediately following the Sunflower Student Movement in 2014, describing the generation born who identify themselves as Taiwanese and claim Taiwan's independent sovereignty. They are inclined to identify with Taiwan and its independence (Huang, 2019). For this generation, Taiwan (or the Republic of China) is an independent country. While they present themselves as Taiwanese and exhibit Sinophobia and anti-China sentiments, they cannot be classified as the “Taiwan independence” camp or subjects of hatred (Teng & Sheng, 2017), primarily because these young people will determine cross-strait issues in the future. Does this mean China is going to let the “naturally independent” young people in Taiwan go their ways and allow the political distance with Taiwan to grow further? In fact, China does not need to worry about the “naturally independent” generation in Taiwan, because there are also young Taiwanese who are “naturally for unification” (Huang, 2019).

Under the Lee Teng-Hui administration in the early 1990s or the subsequent Chen Shui-Bian administration, there was no voice of “the naturally independent” in Taiwan. This new term appeared in Taiwanese society in the wake of the Sunflower Student Movement in 2014. The term arose with the student movement as the catalyst for it quickly becoming popular in Taiwan. Guo-Chang Huang, the then deputy head of the founding team of the up-and-coming New Power Party, said that the “naturally independent” form the DNA of the New Power Party.

This allows the current ruling party to capitalize on the fruits of the “naturally independent”, as a strategy against China and a path towards future elections. However, will the “naturally independent” lean toward independence when it comes to the topic of independence versus unification as pro-independence and pan-Green scholars expect? This study seeks to answer this question.

This should be the case in an ideal scenario. However, other questions soon appear when discussing this topic. Are the “naturally independent” Taiwanese young generation subject to the inference of certain factors (such as salary issues and China’s favorable measures for Taiwanese) in such a way that their thinking becomes inconsistent with the pro-independence camp and pan-Green scholars? Will these “naturally independent” Taiwanese steer away from the ideology of independence, because they may go to China in the pursuit of jobs and higher expected salaries? This paper explores whether China’s favorable measures toward Taiwanese effectively regulate ethnic identity and stance on independence versus unification among the “naturally independent” generation in Taiwan. To this end, we summarize the variables and questions used in surveys conducted by Academia Sinica and Taiwan’s Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) into measurements of research variables.

The measurement scoring is based on the Likert 7-point scale. The research subjects were limited to those between 18 and 24 years old. The questionnaires were issued from March 1 to March 31, 2021, and from July 1 to July 31, 2021. This study released a total of 300 questionnaires and recovered 231 questionnaires for a recovery rate of 77%. After the deletion of unclear questionnaires or those with incomplete data, there were 227 effective questionnaires. To avoid common method variance (CMV) due to subjects’ consistency and similarity in the interpretation of variable information, the measured variables of individual constructs were coded and randomly scattered throughout the questionnaire.

The research findings indicate the following. (1) There is a significant and negative correlation between ethnic identity and stance on independence versus unification. (2) China’s favorable measures toward Taiwanese have a significant and positive influence on Taiwanese young people’s stance on independence versus unification. (3) China’s favorable measures for Taiwanese negatively moderate the relationship between ethnic identity and stance on independence versus unification among Taiwan’s younger generation. In other words, under the condition of strengthening China’s favorable policies towards Taiwan, the negative relationship between the ethnic identity of the young population in Taiwan and their stance on independence versus unification will weaken.

2. Rationality and Emotions of Ethnic Identity and Stance on Independence vs. Unification

The rational choice theory is widely used in political science today, and in fact, it plays an important role in the political studies of Taiwan. A look at the major international journals in politics finds an increasing number of papers based on this theory with research on elections, parliaments, and institutional theories all under its influence (Weingast, 1996). The rational choice theory aims to produce a deductive form of political science with predictive power. Its model construction is based on the same and profoundly influential assumptions of neoclassical economics and brings to our attention that personal and rational behaviors often result in unusual and collective non-rational effects. The argument is that humans are basically driven by the possibility of money and gains. A model has been built on this generalized principle to predict human behaviors (Scott, 2000). In other words, the rational choice theory attempts to construct a formulaic model for behaviors. It is assumed that individuals are rational and exhibit specific behaviors that help in the analysis of the costs and benefits of all possible choices and decisions over the choice to maximize material gains (Kabalak et al., 2015). Furthermore, rational actors act with rationality and maximize personal gains net of costs, almost without considering the consequence of their actions upon other people (Caplin & Dean, 2015).

There are many academic discussions on the rational choice theory in the political science literature. While there is an overall consensus, differences remain (Olson, 1965). In general, given complete and sufficient information, the best course of action for an individual to achieve goals is to be rational (Razmi et al., 2016). This most efficient method also involves the process of maximization in choice-making. It is also the route for the decision-maker to obtain the maximum expected utility (Bernasco et al., 2017). Without knowing for sure the final outcome in an uncertain environment, the decision-maker must make some assumptions about the future, estimate the expected utility of each choice based on these assumptions, and select the choice to maximize the expected utility (Sheng, 2003). In other words, when the decision-maker is faced with multiple courses of action, the typical response is to pursue the choice deemed to be able to produce the best overall outcome (Kabalak et al., 2015). Furthermore, the simplest concept for the decision-maker is parametric decision-making under a certain scenario and without any influence from any other individual from actions to outcomes (Hindmoor, 1995). This

allows for the ranking of outcomes in order of preferences based on actions. As a result, the rational decision-maker selects the most preferred and feasible choice of actions and outcomes within the range of capabilities (Caplin & Dean, 2015). In sum, rational choice is based on ratiion, self-interest, and utility maximization. It is essentially the ranking of preferences according to the gap between revenue and cost without considering other people's thoughts (Green & Shapiro, 1994).

Some scholars posit that rationality usually implies consistency - i.e., the same choice by the same decision-maker in the same circumstances (Riker, 1995). Given the same two specific choices, the decision-maker will always produce a consistent ranking of preferences. Moreover, consistency is subject to transitivity. If the decision-maker prefers A to B and B to C, then he/she certainly prefers A to C. However, does the decision-making process involve rational thinking? From the perspective of psychology, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) find irrational and inconsistent behaviors even in economics and consumption-related matters if the decision-maker is influenced by framing effects and scenarios. Their research proves that people's ranking of preferences runs contrary to the assumption of rationality in different scenarios and due to framing effects. The experiment by Quattrone and Tversky (1988) indicates that people make choices by prioritizing loss aversion over the pursuit of gains. The prediction for the expected value of utility is not calculated with the equation of the rational choice model. The research on non-rationality by Kahneman and Tversky as well as Quattrone and Tversky suggests that non-self-interest economic decisions are made by rational decision-makers through unconscious self-deception due to limited information. Actors are constrained by cognitive capabilities and are unable to make thorough and self-interest judgments. This results in non-rational decisions.

3. Young Taiwanese's Ethnic Identity and Stance on Independence vs. Unification

With the issue of independence versus unification continually on the political agenda in Taiwan, can the public's understanding and stance on it make this issue last very long? Sheng (2002) indicates under the Lee Teng-Hui administration that only 2.6% of Taiwanese people said yes to independence in 1991. This percentage climbed to 6.7% in 1992 but dropped to 3.6% in 1993. Even after the two-state theory was presented in 1999, only 5.7% supported it. The percentages of those for the status quo ranged from 42.6% to 52.9% in 1991-1999, while the percentage of those for unification with China dropped from 24.0% to 16.0%.

Sheng's research indicates that the perception and stance on independence versus unification are dynamic and subject to the cross-strait policy proposed by the political leader. Sheng does not mention young people's stance and perception of independence versus unification at that time and only describes the public's perceived shift of political parties on the spectrum of this topic. The main purpose is to inform the ruling party of the should-be position on the spectrum of independence versus unification for the next election.

Lin (2012) compares the stance on the sides and identification with the "Taiwanese/Chinese" relation in 2004 and 2008. Among the people for independence in the 2004 survey, 59.9% of them held the same opinion in 2008. However, 28.9% of them switched to the "status quo" option. Lin (2012) indicates that the Taiwanese public increasingly identified themselves as Taiwanese after China's promulgation of the Anti-Secession Law against Taiwan in 2005 and the statement of not giving up the use of force to maintain China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In brief, the findings from that research and Sheng's research are consistent. Both authors emphasize the positive correlation and the dynamic relation between ethnic awareness and stance on independence versus unification. The emergence of events such as the two-state theory and the Anti-Secession Law that add to cross-strait tensions leans the status-quo supporters toward independence.

It is worth noting that neither Chiung-Chu Lin nor Shing-Yuan Sheng examine the young generation's ethnic identity and stance, but the answer can be found in Szu-Chien Hsu's study and poll summary within "2018 Democratic Values and Governance in Taiwan". Hsu (2018) indicates that 65.5% of the respondents below 39 years old are for the status quo, 10.4% for unification, and 23.5% for independence. Among the respondents at least 40 years old, 59.3% are for the status quo, 20.1% for unification, and 14.7% for independence.

Lin (2017) points out the poll results by Taiwan Brain Trust after the meeting between President Ma of Taiwan (R.O.C.) and President Xi of China. The statistics show that 98% of young people identify themselves as Taiwanese and only 2% think they are Chinese. As many as 81.9% of them believe that Taiwan should become an independent country. Both Hsu (2018) and Lin (2017) highlight the important message that the age group for Taiwanese awareness is becoming younger.

This begs the question of whether ethnic identity and stance on independence versus unification is important to the younger crowd. Will their original stance and perception falter in the face of China's military threat? According to Hsu's study, 70% of Taiwanese youth will fight for Taiwan if China resorts to force in resolving the cross-strait problem. Even so, this does not mean that Taiwanese young people dislike China. They are only

saying that they do not like the idea of being unified by China. As for the question of whether the “naturally independent” group supports Taiwan’s independence, the answer is that they are against unification on this issue.

In a nutshell, ethnic identity and stance on independence versus unification are issues of debate during every election (both presidential and legislative) in Taiwan. Sometimes people talk eloquently about this topic but become quiet at times or on certain occasions. As far as the stances and attitudes of political parties are concerned, the Kuomintang (KMT) has long been considered the party as leaning towards unification, while the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is deemed to lean towards independence. However, political parties make timely adjustments in different periods. For instance, Ma Ying-Jeou (KMT president) during an election came up with the cross-strait policy of New Three Nos - no unification, no independence, and no use of force. While the DPP acknowledges the “Republic of China” as its national identity, it posits that Taiwan is an independent sovereign (Lin, 2012).

Most people believe that young people are more pro-independence than mature adults. According to a poll by the Sunflower Student Movement in March 2014, 28.5% of young people were for Taiwan independence, but a poll in April 2017 shows 26.0% of them were for independence. Apparently, the young generation’s stance on independence versus unification is no different from the public and changes as events develop. While Taiwanese young people have strong Taiwanese awareness, they are pragmatic with regard to political and economic relations with China. As far as the naturally independent generation is concerned, the perception and stance on independence versus unification are important. Does this mean unlike the Taiwan independence advocates and the DPP camp young people directly deny the existence of the Republic of China? Is the opposition to unification currently their main political appeal? Based on the above discussion, this study develops the research hypothesis as follows.

H₁: The ethnic identity of young people in Taiwan significantly and negatively influences their stance on independence versus unification.

Taiwanese young people are dissatisfied with the ruling party due to low salaries and a lack of job opportunities for a long time. Chen (2016) indicates that the DPP administration has been focusing on transitional justice with key measures in the rectification of improper assets held by political parties and pensions to public servants and reforms of the judicial system. However, most Taiwanese people do not feel the effects of these reforms. What they do feel is their wallets becoming smaller. The expression “ankles flooded with Taiwanese money” is a thing of the past. In fact, low salaries have been a chronic issue in Taiwan. The Chen Shui-Bian administration, the Ma Ying-Jeou administration, and the Tsai Ing-Wen administration have never developed an effective remedy for stagnant salaries in the last thirty years, which has pushed Taiwanese people to go overseas or even to China for work.

This is a continual warning signal for the country’s brain drain. Due to low salaries in Taiwan, Taiwanese people have to leave their homes for work, and even pan-Green young supporters are open for jobs in China. Taiwan is essentially pushing out young people for offshore job opportunities. At this juncture, China’s timely and favorable measures for Taiwanese become a pull factor. Will this push from Taiwan and pull from China budge the young generation’s perception and stance on independence versus unification? Based on the above discussion, this study develops the next research hypotheses as follows.

H₂: China’s favorable measures toward Taiwanese have a significant and positive influence on Taiwanese young people’s stance on independence versus unification.

H₃: China’s favorable measures for Taiwanese negatively moderate the relationship between ethnic identity and stance on independence versus unification among Taiwan’s younger generation. In other words, under the condition of strengthening China’s favorable policies towards Taiwan, the negative relationship between the ethnic identity of the young population in Taiwan and their stance on independence versus unification will weaken.

4. Research Design

4.1 Data Collection

The data source is from a questionnaire survey on young Taiwanese people aged between 18 and 24 years old as they are somewhere between the camps of “naturally independent” and “naturally for unification”. The questionnaire survey targets students from a technology university in the southern region of Taiwan. The questionnaires were issued from July 1 to July 31, 2021. This study released a total of 300 questionnaires and recovered 231 questionnaires for a recovery rate of 77%. After the deletion of unclear questionnaires or those with incomplete data, there were 227 effective questionnaires.

4.2 Variable Definitions and Measurements

This study seeks to measure the following dimensions:

4.2.1 In this study, the identification of the young demographic in Taiwan refers to whether they identify as 'I am Taiwanese' or 'I am both Taiwanese and Chinese', is considered a categorical variable.

4.2.2 There are four questions for the dimension of one's stance on independence versus unification. Dimensional issues include "I support Taiwan becoming an independent and fully sovereign nation." and "I believe that Taiwan should have its own voice in the international community." and "I believe that Taiwan should economically rely on China" and "I believe that Taiwan should share international policies and positions with China" This is measured with the Likert 7-point scale. Cronbach's α is 0.971 for this dimension.

4.2.3 There are five questions on China's favorable measures toward Taiwanese. Dimensional issues include "I believe that China's preferential policies towards Taiwan contribute to promoting cross-strait economic cooperation and exchange." and "I believe that China's preferential policies towards Taiwan are beneficial in improving Taiwan's economy and the welfare of its people." and "I believe that China's preferential policies towards Taiwan align with the expectations and interests of the people in Taiwan." and "I believe that China's preferential policies towards Taiwan have a positive impact on easing cross-strait tensions." and "I believe that China's preferential policies towards Taiwan should be an important consideration in the discussion of cross-strait unification or independence." This dimension is measured with the Likert 7-point scale. Cronbach's α is 0.938 for this dimension.

This study collects the subjective assessment of respondents who self-report. To avoid the potential effect of common method variance (CMV) due to the same data sources, this study performs Harman's one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), which is a posteriori test for common method bias. According to the assumptions of this one-factor test, the unrotated first principal component reflects CMV in an optimal response.

If this explains the main variance of both the independent variables and the dependent variables, then it indicates the presence of CMV among variables (Peng et al., 2006). Therefore, this study conducts factor analysis with the Varimax method on all variables, including ethnic identity, stance with political parties, and China's favorable measures toward Taiwanese. After the principal factor analysis on the data, three factors with an eigenvalue of greater than 1 are extracted from 10 questions. The highest explained variation with a single factor is 35.895%, and the cumulative explained variance is 78.382%. These values suggest that CMV is not a problem with the collected data.

5. Empirical Results on Ethnic Identity, Stance on Independence vs. Unification, and China's Favorable Measures for Taiwanese

This study conducts Haye's Process Model 1, with ethnic identity as the independent variable, stance on independence and unification as the dependent variable, and China's favorable measures for Taiwanese as the regulating variable (Table 1).

Table 1. Haye's Process Model 1 on ethnic identity, stance on independence and unification, and China's favorable measures for Taiwanese

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β -value	t-value	β -value	t-value	β -value	t-value
Ethnic identity	-.974	-64.565	-.905	-34.113	-.887	-33.753
China's favorable measures for Taiwanese			.084	3.155	.152	4.771
Ethnic identity x China's favorable measures for Taiwanese					-.076	-3.656
F-value	4168.641		2172.235		1532.567	
R ²	.949		.951		.954	
ΔR^2	.949		.951		.953	

This paper conducts tests on Haye's Process Model 1 (Table 1) on Taiwanese young people aged between 18 and 24 regarding ethnic identity, stance on independence versus unification, and China's favorable measures for Taiwanese. The results indicate that Taiwanese youth's agreement with the statement "I am Taiwanese" versus "I am both Taiwanese and Chinese" has a negative influence on the support for independence versus unification. Model 1 in Table 1 shows the results on ethnic identity as well as the stance on independence versus unification. With β at -0.974 and the absolute t value of 64.565 > 1.96, H1 is supported. Model 2 indicates the positive influence of China's favorable measures for Taiwanese over the stance on independence versus unification. With β at 0.084 and the value of t of 3.155 > 1.96, H2 is supported. Model 3 suggests the positive influence of the interaction between ethnic identity and China's favorable measures for Taiwanese over the stance on independence versus unification. With β at -0.076 and the absolute t value of 3.656 > 1.96, China's favorable measures for Taiwanese have significant negative moderating effects on the influence of ethnic identity over the stance on independence versus unification. In other words, if China's favorable policies towards Taiwan are intensified, the negative relationship between the ethnic identity of the young population in Taiwan and their stance on independence versus unification will weaken. H3 is supported.

6. Conclusions

This study establishes a Haye' Process Model 1 based on relevant data for the effectiveness of China's favorable measures toward Taiwanese. The model contains three constructs: Taiwanese young people's perception of whether they identify as Taiwanese or as both Taiwanese and Chinese; extreme stance on independence versus unification; and the effectiveness of China's favorable measures for Taiwanese.

Based on Haye's Process Model 1, the research findings help to observe whether the change in Taiwanese young people's stance on independence versus unification is subject to the regulation of China's favorable measures toward Taiwanese. The findings serve as a reference to China in its judgment and determination of Taiwanese young people's stance on independence versus unification and fine-tuning its favorable measures for Taiwanese going forward.

This study found that although ethnic identity among young Taiwanese individuals may negatively influence their stance on the issue of reunification or independence, the impact of ethnic identity on the unification-independence position among Taiwan's young population is a complex and multifaceted issue (Qi, Zhang & Lin, 2022).

In Taiwan, ethnic identity and the unification-independence stance are complex and sensitive topics. Ethnic identity among young Taiwanese individuals is often categorized as "Taiwanese localization consciousness," emphasizing Taiwan as an independent country or having an independent identity (Dawley, 2020).

However, some young Taiwanese individuals may be concerned that emphasizing local consciousness could lead

to tense relations with other regions such as China, and subsequently have negative implications for the economy, society, and international affairs. These individuals may lean towards maintaining a stable relationship with China and advocate for resolving disputes through dialogue and cooperation (Kironksa & Turcsanyi, 2023).

Consequently, they may adopt a more conservative and cautious attitude toward the unification stance. It is evident that the political stance of young Taiwanese individuals varies greatly on an individual level and cannot be generalized. While Taiwanese localization consciousness is relatively widespread among the younger generation, it is not universal, and young people's political positions may change over time and with different experiences (Dawley, 2020).

Furthermore, this study found that China's favorable measures toward Taiwan have a significant and positive influence on Taiwanese young people's identification with China. In other words, China's favorable measures play a constructive role in enhancing the identification of Taiwan's young generation with China (Lee, 2020).

For Taiwanese youth, these measures may provide them with more economic opportunities and benefits (such as business prospects and employment opportunities), thereby strengthening their sense of identification with China. Additionally, through cross-strait exchange activities, Taiwanese young people have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of China's culture, values, and way of life (Šabič, Z., & Huang, 2021). This cross-strait exchange can foster interethnic identification, making Taiwanese youth more receptive to China.

This study also found that China's favorable measures toward Taiwan have a strengthening positive impact on the ethnic identity and unification-independence stance of young Taiwanese. In other words, as the intensity of China's favorable measures toward Taiwan increases, the positive relationship between ethnic identity and the unification-independence stance among young Taiwanese becomes stronger (Tsai, 2021).

Undeniably, China's favorable measures are often associated with economic benefits, such as economic cooperation, investment opportunities, and market openness. These measures can bring economic opportunities and benefits that positively impact the lives and employment prospects of young Taiwanese individuals. Through economic exchanges and cooperation with China, young Taiwanese people may have more exposure to Chinese culture, values, and way of life, thereby deepening their sense of identification with China (Lee, Wu, Tan & Yang, 2020).

China's favorable measures may promote cultural exchanges and interactions between both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Through cultural exchange activities, young Taiwanese individuals have the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of China's cultural traditions, language, and arts (Nesterova, 2023). This cross-cultural exchange can break stereotypes and misconceptions, fostering a stronger sense of identification with China among young Taiwanese people.

Certainly, China's favorable measures may involve educational cooperation and exchanges between both sides of the Taiwan Strait, such as providing scholarships, exchange programs, and academic collaborations. Through educational cooperation, young Taiwanese individuals have the opportunity to study, exchange, and experience life in China, further deepening their sense of identification with China (Wang, 2020).

In summary, this study highlights the complex and multifaceted relationship between ethnic identity, the unification-independence stance, and China's favorable measures toward Taiwan among young Taiwanese individuals. Ethnic identity, often characterized as Taiwanese localization consciousness, can influence their stance on reunification or independence. While some young Taiwanese individuals prioritize emphasizing local consciousness and may have concerns about strained relations with China, others lean towards maintaining stable relations and advocating for dialogue and cooperation (Hass, Glaser & Bush, 2023).

The study also emphasizes the positive impact of China's favorable measures on young Taiwanese individuals' identification with China, driven by economic opportunities, cultural exchanges, and educational cooperation. It is important to recognize that individual political stances vary greatly, and the effects of these factors cannot be generalized. Furthermore, young people's political positions may evolve over time and with different experiences.

Based on the aforementioned research conclusions and findings, this study offers theoretical and practical contributions as follows:

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

Understanding the complex relationship: This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted relationship between ethnic identity, the unification-independence stance, and China's favorable measures toward Taiwan among young Taiwanese individuals (Yau, 2016). It sheds light on the interplay of these

factors and their influence on the political attitudes of the youth.

Exploring the role of ethnic identity: By highlighting the influence of ethnic identity, specifically Taiwanese localization consciousness, on the unification-independence stance, this study adds to the existing literature on the role of ethnic identity in shaping political orientations (Stockton, 2002).

Recognizing individual differences: This study emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the individual variations in political stances among young Taiwanese individuals (Jung, 2021). It underscores the need to consider diverse perspectives and experiences when analyzing the impact of ethnic identity and China's measures on political attitudes.

6.2 Practical Contributions

Policy implications: The findings of this study provide insights for policymakers and stakeholders involved in cross-strait relations. It highlights the potential positive impact of China's favorable measures on enhancing young Taiwanese individuals' identification with China, suggesting the importance of continued efforts in promoting economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and educational collaboration (Wang, 2023).

Enhancing cross-strait understanding: The study underscores the significance of cultural exchange activities in fostering a deeper understanding between Taiwan and China. It suggests the promotion of more opportunities for young Taiwanese individuals to engage in cross-strait cultural interactions, which can contribute to reducing stereotypes and fostering a sense of mutual recognition and acceptance (Kasai, 2022).

Addressing concerns and promoting dialogue: The study highlights the concerns of young Taiwanese individuals regarding strained relations and the potential negative implications of emphasizing local consciousness. It emphasizes the importance of addressing these concerns through peaceful dialogue, cooperation, and efforts to maintain stable relations between the two sides (Anwar, 2020).

In conclusion, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions by providing insights into the complex relationship between ethnic identity, the unification-independence stance, and China's measures, and by highlighting the potential positive effects on young Taiwanese individuals' identification with China.

6.3 Research Recommendations

Based on the theoretical and practical contributions mentioned above, this study proposes the following research recommendations:

Further, investigate the relationship between ethnic identity and political stance: Future research can delve deeper into exploring the relationship between ethnic identity and the unification-independence stance, particularly through comparative studies among young individuals with different ethnic identity perspectives. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how ethnic identity influences political stances and its variations across different backgrounds.

Examine the mechanisms through which China's favorable measures impact young individuals: Further research can focus on investigating the specific mechanisms through which China's favorable measures, including economic opportunities, cultural exchanges, and educational cooperation, influence young individuals. This would provide a more in-depth understanding and assist in developing targeted policy measures.

Consider individual differences and temporal changes: Further explore the impact of individual differences on the relationship between ethnic identity and political stance, as well as how these stances evolve over time and with different experiences. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the formation process of political attitudes among young individuals and provide more accurate predictions and analyses.

Investigate the influence of cross-cultural exchanges: Further, study the impact of cross-cultural exchange activities on young individuals' sense of identification and how to enhance the effectiveness of such exchanges. This would provide practical recommendations on fostering mutual recognition and understanding between Taiwan and China, contributing to the promotion of peaceful cross-strait relations.

Conduct comparative studies in transnational contexts: Comparative research on the relationship between ethnic identity and political stance among young individuals in other countries or regions would offer a cross-national perspective and broaden our understanding of young individuals' political attitudes.

In conclusion, these research recommendations can further deepen our understanding of the relationship between ethnic identity, the unification-independence stance, and China's measures. They provide valuable guidance for policymakers and researchers to promote peaceful development in cross-strait relations.

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