

Political Communication: Talking about Politics
POLS 418
MWF 10:00-10:50

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Before we get started...

- ▶ Projects
- ▶ Final Exam
- ▶ News
- ▶ For 5 bonus points, what is one of the groups that Walsh examines in her study?

First Impressions

- ▶ What are your first impressions of the book?
- ▶ What is the primary goal of the book?

Methods

- ▶ How does the author go about examining the presence of political talk?
- ▶ What qualifies as political talk?
- ▶ What groups does the author examine?
- ▶ Why does she examine these groups? Are they reflective of the rest of the U.S? Why do people join these groups? Are these political groups?
- ▶ What is the unit of analysis?
- ▶ Can we relate Walsh's project to your projects?

Occurrence of Political Talk

- ▶ Is political talk frequent among the old timers?

The Shape of a Political Conversation

Mike Yeah, Luke said someone might have stolen it for its antique value.

Alice Oh, I suppose...

Orville Like these ashtrays [pointing to the ashtrays that are left on the tables until the afternoon crowd starts arriving, laughing a little because the ashtrays are aged and inexpensive].

Harold Oh yes [sarcastically]. Very valuable.

Orville Someone said that had disappeared.

Mike Oh, I think they put out those new ones for special occasions...

Harold Special occasions like when Lynn Rivers [the local Democratic member of Congress] or Ingrid Sheldon [the Republican mayor of Ann Arbor] comes down here!

The Shape of a Political Conversation

Todd Could probably have them replaced at the Kiwanis [weekly rummage sale] for a dime.

Harold Heh, for a dime? They'd probably give them to you!

Mike I heard on the radio this morning Rivers hadn't decided how she's going to vote on whether to hold impeachment hearings or not. Said she won't decide until the vote.

Harold Right. Hasn't had all the information yet [sarcastically], has to hear all sides—

Mike She's not sure which way she's going to vote.

Social Identity

- ▶ Rubric-will be on course website this afternoon.
- ▶ Final Exam
- ▶ BonusT/F (5 pts): In comparing the craft guild and the old timers, Walsh demonstrates that the development of a social identity was the same for both groups.
- ▶ Bonus (5 pts): Why does Walsh care about social identity?
- ▶ News

Social Identity

- ▶ First names of three people you talk to most about important matters.
- ▶ Thinking about these people do you you tend to agree or disagree when it comes to talking about politics?
- ▶ Would you say that these people have similar interests to you.
- ▶ Homophily

Social Identity

- ▶ Why would collective identity matter to Walsh's project?
 - ▶ ...and to political talk?
- ▶ When it comes to the development of a social identity, how do the old timers and craft guild differ?
- ▶ What kind of evidence do they provide that these groups have a collective identity?
- ▶ Do the authors provide evidence that political talk varies based on social identity?
- ▶ Do you buy the evidence the author has provided? Is it sufficient or do you need more evidence?
- ▶ Thinking about your online forums, how does social identity form? Do you think it depends on the type of forum? Is the development of a social identity in online forums closer to that of the old timers or craft guild?

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Craft Guild

Eloise You know, they're talking about parking downtown, and I think that for handicapped people, there ought to be spaces you can park in for free. They're talking about raising the prices of the meters and the garages for \$1 per hour. That's just too much for people who are handicapped.

Kathy You mean that people who can't walk should have a place to park for free?

Eloise That's right.

Elnor Well, if you do that then someone will use the space that isn't handicapped. Many times people use those spaces when they're with a handicapped family member, but then abuse the privilege when they're on their own?

Eloise I suppose. But then they ought to make it cheaper.

Craft Guild.....Cont'd

Kathy Well, I think that's a good idea. You should call the city building.

Eloise Well, I wrote it down in that survey they sent out. You know, that thing on city spending.

Kathy Good for you.

Eloise You know, it's hard to get around downtown. It's hard to get around when you're handicapped. But I surely won't go there at all if I can't park there.

Elnor I haven't been downtown in about one year.

Doris No kidding...[in agreement with Elnor.]

Old Timers

Charlie Hey did you hear they're going to put meters on Fourth and Fifth Streets?

Kathy No kidding, I park there!

Bill For a buck.

Kathy It's going to be a dollar?

John Yep, dollar an hour in June.

Charlie That council—nuttier than a fruitcake, then they wonder why everybody goes out to [the local mall].

Old Timers...Cont'd

Bill Idiots. No wonder there's no downtown...[...]...How long did it take them to decide what to do with that parking structure?

Kathy Eight months?

Mack So stupid, they waited until *all* the parking structures started to collapse and then impose a millage.

John And raid the parking fee...

Mack Makes no sense.

Bill Bunch of idiots.

Constraints

- ▶ Does our social identity constrain our conversations?
- ▶ I'm guessing on our typical Friday night out, you frequent the same bar from week to week, probably Pinch or Sidetracks. Based on what we have read in the Walsh book , should we expect to find that people are talking about politics at the bar on Friday nights

Digesting the News

- ▶ In chapter 6, how does Walsh go about exploring how people digest news, given their group membership. How does she go about this examination? What kinds of news stories does she rely on?
- ▶ When necessary, Walsh brought up topics that had appeared in the news the night before. Is this problematic?
- ▶ Zaller's RAS model and media effects expectations that Walsh lays out?
- ▶ What does Walsh find with regards to media and social identity? Is there support for the RAS model?

Trust

- ▶ “...two people experience identical interaction with the government yet come away from it with different levels of trust in government...(p. 149).
 - ▶ What explains this difference according to Walsh? Is it their prior level of trust? Is there something else going on here?
- ▶ What groups does Walsh use to examine how social identification affects political trust? Should we expect differences in these groups? What does she find?

Implications

- ▶ What implications does Walsh's study have for enhancing citizenship?
- ▶ Are there causes for concern?
- ▶ Are there other implications?

How do *you* talk about politics?

- ▶ Have you ever found yourself talking about politics on a Friday night?
- ▶ Given what Walsh find with regards to social context, what would we expect when you are at the bar with our friends versus when you are at the bar as part of a social hour with a group from work?
- ▶ Now let's say that on Friday nights you decide to go off on your own? You head over to PKs or your local VFW and sit at the bar. You find people are friendly and start talking to them. If you start hanging out at a different bar, say PK's or the the local VFW, how is this likely to affect your privately held interpretations? Would it reinforce our boundaries or would it cause you to modify your social identification?