Voters’ Political Conversations during the 2005 German Parliamentary Election Campaign: Causes and Consequences

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“word-of-mouth communication that occurs in face-to-face interaction between two or more individuals”

But: not all (political) talk is the same; differences exist...

- ... in the frequency of occurrence
- ... in the level of disagreement
- ... with regard to the relationship between talking individuals („strong“ vs. „weak ties“; „primary“ vs. „secondary relations“)
AIM OF THE PAPER

• Analysis of the causes and consequences of (the different dimensions of) interpersonal communication

• Special attention is paid to the dynamics of interpersonal communication in the course of a campaign, as our data for 2005 is especially suitable to do so

• Put results to a first test to see whether we find similar results for the 2009 election
2005 DATA: ROLLING CROSS-SECTION SURVEY

First Wave: Pre-Election

Second Wave: Post-Election

August  September  October

Federal Election 2005

N = 3.583

N = 2.420
2009 DATA: THE GLES

[Diagram showing the data collection process for the GLES, including different panels and analyses from 2002 to 2017.

- 1: Vorwahl-Querschnitt
- 1: Nachwahl-Querschnitt
- 2: RCS mit Nachwahl-Panel
- 3: Kurzfrist-Wahlkampf-Panel
- 4: Wahlkampf-Medieninhaltanalyse
- 5: TV-Duell-Analyse
- 6: Kandidatenstudie
- 7: Vorwahl-Langfrist-Panel
- 8: Langfrist-Online-Tracking
- 9: Langfristige Medien- und Ereignisanalyse

Panel 2013+2017]

Gemeinsamer Kern

Querschnitte und Panel 2002+2005

Juni Juli August September Oktober November Dezember

Bundestagswahl 2009

inkl. CSES
Sixth Wave of Online Trackings, a few days before Election Day

2009 DATA: THE GLES
QUESTIONS INCLUDED

• Do you talk to your family and friends about politics? [If so] On how many days have you done so during the last week?

• What would you say, how often have you had different opinions in these talks – very often, often, sometimes, rarely or never?

• And do you talk to your colleagues and neighbors about politics? [If so] On how many days have you done so during the last week?

• What would you say, how often have you had different opinions in these talks – very often, often, sometimes, rarely or never?
DETERMINANTS OF FREQUENCY

• Three prerequisites for having a discussion:
  – willingness to talk
  – someone to talk to
  – something to talk about
DETERMINANTS OF FREQUENCY

• So what can be expected?

  – Motivational variables (interest in politics, party identification) should increase the frequency

  – Talk in primary groups as a function of household composition, talk in secondary groups as a function of employment situation and wider setting

  – Mass media (esp. quality media) as content providers
DETERMINANTS OF FREQUENCY

• Dynamics?

  – As Election Day approaches, the pressure on voters to make up their mind increases, increasing need for information
TALK DURING THE 2005 CAMPAIGN: OCCURENCE

![Graph showing talk occurrence during the 2005 campaign with dates from 13 August 2005 to 17 September 2005, with lines representing primary and secondary occurrence.]

- Primary
- Secondary
LOGISTIC REGRESSION: WHO DID TALK IN 2005?

Unstandardized coefficients (rescaled to 0/1), primary
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Unstandardized coefficients (rescaled to 0/1), primary
LOGISTIC REGRESSION: WHO DID TALK IN 2005?

Unstandardized coefficients (rescaled to 0/1), primary
LOGISTIC REGRESSION: WHO DID TALK IN 2005?

Unstandardized coefficients, primary and secondary
AND IN 2009?

Unstandardized coefficients, primary and secondary
DETERMINANTS OF DISAGREEMENT

• Motivational and structural variables likely to be less important

• Mass media as provider of arguments for discussions, to be aware of differences

• More disagreement in secondary relations („crossing lines of difference“ compared to homogenous primary groups)

• Dynamics: „disambiguation“ as a consequence of campaigns vs. increasing polarization in the course of a campaign
DISAGREEMENT DURING THE 2005 CAMPAIGN

Graph showing disagreement trends with dates from 13 August 2005 to 17 September 2005.

- **Primary** (solid line)
- **Secondary** (dashed line)

Dates:
- 13aug2005
- 20aug2005
- 27aug2005
- 03sep2005
- 10sep2005
- 17sep2005
OLS REGRESSION: WHO DID DISAGREE IN 2005?

Unstandardized coefficients, primary
OLS REGRESSION: WHO DID DISAGREE IN 2005?

Unstandardized coefficients, primary and secondary

[Graph showing unstandardized coefficients for various variables such as Interest in Pol., PI, Spouse, Unempl., Village, Town, Church Att., Union memb., Public TV, Private TV, Newspaper, BILD (Tabloid), WWW, Day, Male, Age, ALev., Level of Talk.]
AND IN 2009?

Unstandardized coefficients, primary and secondary
CONSEQUENCES OF TALKING

• „The basic idea is straightforward: Interactions with others enhance one’s likelihood of political participation“ (Manza et al. 2005: 209)

• Mutz (2002): political talk possibly causes „political ambivalence“ and „social accountability“ if disagreement is encountered

• Scheufele et al. (2004) expect that heterogeneous network have stimulating effects
DEPENDENT VARIABLES

- Turnout Intention (2005 and 2009)
- Response latencies for vote intentions (2005 only)
- Perceived difficulty of making up one’s mind (in retrospect, post-election wave, 2005 only)
## DID TALKING MATTER IN 2005?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turnout</th>
<th>“Vote Choice was easy”</th>
<th>Response Latencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Primary Talk</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.046</td>
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<td>Level of Sec. Talk</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Primary Disagreement</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
<td>-0.134*</td>
<td>-0.121*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Secondary Disagreement</td>
<td>0.375***</td>
<td>0.147*</td>
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<td>R²</td>
<td>0.316</td>
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AND IN 2009?

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<td>Level of Sec. Talk</td>
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<td>Level of Primary Disagreement</td>
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<td>Level of Secondary Disagreement</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>563</td>
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<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.297</td>
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NEXT STEPS

• For the 2009 study, we also have dyadic network data for up to two discussion partners
  - Frequency of Discussion
  - Relationship
  - Perceived Expertise
  - Level of Disagreement
  - Perceived Vote Intention

• Methodologically: Which approach is better suited to study such research questions?
• Substantially: Also include effects on party choice