**Социология. Текст 1.**

**Gender and Public Talk:**

**Accounting for Women’s**

**Variable Participation in the**

**Public Sphere**

**Francesca Polletta1 and Pang Ching Bobby Chen**

**Abstract**

This article develops a theory of the gendered character of public talk as a way to account for women’s variable participation in the settings that make up the public sphere. Public settings for citizen talk such as radio call-in shows, social networking sites, letters to the editor, and town hall meetings are culturally coded female or male. In feminized settings, where the people who organize public talk are from feminized professions and where the favored modes of talk and action emphasize stereotypically feminine values, women are likely to be as active and influential participants as men. We test this proposition by way of an examination of the organized public deliberative forums in which many Americans today discuss policy issues. We show that women truly are equal participants in these forums. We account for this surprising development by demonstrating the female gendered character of the contemporary field of organized public deliberation.

**Keywords**

deliberative democracy, culture, gender

While advocates across the political spectrum have championed the importance of citizen

talk for healthy democracies, social scientists have cautioned that depending on the circumstances,public talk can be narrow-minded (Bellah et al. 1985; Perrin 2006), apolitical

(Eliasoph 1998; Mutz 2006), paralyzingly contentious (Baiocchi 2005), exclusive

(Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2003; Lichterman 2005), alienating (Fishman 2004; S. Hart

2001; Lee 2007), or only sociable rather than oriented to solving problems (Schudson

1997). What matters are the social norms defining the topics that are appropriate, the

styles of talk that are acceptable, the courses of action that are imaginable, the kinds of

evidence that are credible, and the people whose opinions are authoritative. Sociologists

have located those norms variously in the “group style” of particular organizations

(Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Lichterman 2005), in the idiom of associational structures

such as churches and unions (Perrin 2006), in the deep codes of civil discourse

(Alexander and Smith 1993), in the character of ties linking social groups (Baoicchi 2005;

Fishman 2004), or in a regional cultural repertoire (Bellah et al. 1985; Eliasoph 1998; Lee

2007; Mutz 2006).

**Социология. Текст 2.**

 We contribute to these lines of inquiry by theorizing about the norms that make citizen talk equal: that is, talk in which people’s social status does not determine the likelihood that they participate, express opinions, or are listened to seriously. That citizen talk be egalitarian

in this sense is central to normative theories of deliberative democracy (Bohman 1996;

Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Knight and Johnson 1997) and makes intuitive sense. After

all, granting groups access to the public sphere would not count for much if they were not

listened to there. We focus on equality between men and women and we locate the norms

producing gender equality in the *gendered character of the institutional settings in which*

*public talk takes place*. Settings such as radio call-in shows, legislative hearings, social networking sites, and public deliberative forums communicate different messages about the

appropriate gender of authoritative speakers, topics, and styles of talk. The gendering of the

site affects how men and women participate in it. It may also affect how much influence

their talk has outside the site.

 By default, most sites of public political talk are masculine. However, some of the discourses that are used to talk about public life are anchored in feminized institutions such as

social work and psychotherapy (Cloud 1998; Tonn 2005). Similarly, some settings for public

talk communicate stereotypically feminine norms of participation. In this article, we

theorize the features of settings of public talk that define them as feminized or masculinized,

the processes by which settings become feminized or masculinized, and the consequences of

a setting’s gender coding for the talk that takes place within it. To do these things, we draw

on scholarship on the gendering of occupations but we adapt its expectations to account for

public talk rather than employment. We contrast our account of the conditions in which men

and women participate equally in public talk with perspectives that emphasize the gender

composition of the group and the gendered character of the topic.