Weber, Chase: Community Solidarity of Wayland NY in Light of 2016 Presidential Race

Research Proposal:

The 2016 presidential race will probably go down in history as the most contentious race in modern US history. I am interested in seeing how this presidential race is impacting small towns/villages. I will be looking at the dynamics of my home town of Wayland NY to see what the race is doing to the community with regards to solidarity. That is, is this race pulling Wayland apart or bringing residence closer together? To figure all of this out, I plan on interviewing a few people from the community. I want to focus on the older generation to get a comparison between this and past elections and compare how the community has reacted to past elections. Since older citizens are more likely to participate in the political process (Kurien: 187) I want to build my final video around their thoughts about the community. I plan on sitting down with some of them for interviews. Below are some of the questions that I plan on asking.

Interview questions:

Do you see where the community is splitting apart between the two candidates or is the community coming together in support of one particular candidate?

Do you think that the community will be more active in this election than past ones?

Do you think that the community members will be voting based on the needs of the community or the needs of the nation overall?

Have you ever seen an election that has produced such pressures on the community?

Over all, I hope to gain a better understanding of how national elections impact the town of Wayland and in what way the community itself reacts to national elections.

Cited Works:

Kurien, P.


There is no anthropological foundation to this proposal. The syllabus specifically notes that you must reference course readings and anthropological research.

Scholarly Background:

Wayland N.Y is home to 4102 individuals as of 2010 (Fact Finder). A small farming community comprising a majority of white residents, 97% in 2010 (Fact Finder), the community is a tight-knit one. Everyone knows everyone. The purpose of this writing is to investigate how this community was influenced by the 2016 Presidential Race as well as how the community voted on Election day. The county in which the town lays, voted quit strongly for the republican candidates (Roby). Was this true for Wayland? Also, how does this community compare to others politically? The main question is whether or not the community was standing behind one candidate or if it is split between the two. To begin, an understanding of how a sense of community and community success is formulated and supported among residents must be explored. A sense of community is formulated and strengthened as residents interact with one another in social areas (Whitman year: 441). These social connections have substantial impacts on how the community in a whole reacts to different situations. In this studies case, how the small community of Wayland reacted to the 2016 presidential election.

In terms of community involvement in politics, the older generations are the most likely to participate (Kurien; all citations should have years 187). However, this is not always enough for the community to be fully heard. A community's viability rests on all residents' commitment to the process (Fabiansson: 51). That is, all members must partake. This is where the necessity of social networking comes into play. Social networks are best created through trust among members (Fabiansson: 52). The more trust, the more successful a community. In Wayland, trust is not always an essential element but it does play a role in elections at all levels. Members trust one another for votes that will aid in their political agendas or desires. The same is true of the candidates themselves. The less trustworthy, the less votes they will accumulate. In the case of the presidential race, the community seems to have had little trust in Hillary Clinton and as a result, few votes were expected for her. Another form of building social ties between members is social media. Social media can have profound effects on a communities like or dislike of a candidate. They create a form of "political folklore" (Duffy: 177) that can influence voting behavior. Images help to amplify messages giving lasting impressions on a candidate's accomplishments or failures in office or whether or not they will be effective in the position they are running for (Duffy: 177).

A sense of community is often a result of all members engaging the political process. "Voting and contacting government officials" (Hennessy: 467) are just a few of the ways that communities feel closer together. As the election drew closer, Wayland continuously encouraged voting. But how were they going to vote as a whole? Hennessy states that voters vote based on "perceptions of candidates' personality traits" (Hennessy: 467). Wayland as a whole was nervous about voting for Hillary due to lack of trust but they were also worried about Trump due to his lack of censorship in speeches. Another factor that played a role in Wayland's voting pattern was that the members of the community may have voted based on the needs of themselves or the community. Hennessy also states this as a driving factor because it "explains voting as an outcome of group affiliations" (Hennessy:467) or needs.
This does not only apply to Wayland either. Elsewhere in the U.S., different communities are practicing similar behavior. Since different kinds of community can exist at different levels (Ziegahn: 462), one can look at the national community of Arab Muslims who also display similar voting patterns. Instead of benefiting their community, they seem to participate in politics increasingly due to religious affiliations (Hyvonen: 45). This demonstrates that for some groups religion acts as a foundation for solidarity in communities (Kurien: 288, Logan: 19) and creates a sense of community for those who practice the same religion. As a result, Arab Muslims have begun producing voting and civic participation rates that equal those of the general U.S. population. A similar reasoning can be said of Latinos. They become engaged in the politics for religious purposes but also due to “the reality that political decisions may affect their lives” (Sandoval: 526). These decisions would appear to be another factor in Wayland’s voting behavior. Due to the high white population in the community, seasonal immigrants working the farms are not always welcomed. This presents an issue for minorities both in Wayland and in other rural areas. As immigrants expand into rural settings, the stage is set for “challenges for immigrant assimilation and integration” (Garcia: 81) into the community. In Wayland’s interests, Donald Trump spoke a sense of hope to the community in hopes of getting immigrants out.

Over all, it was found that Wayland favored Trump, while a few supported Clinton. His political affiliations were far within the interests of the community. In return, he earned their vote. There is some interesting background here, but it wandered away from the core issue or community solidarity/division in the election. Division for example was barely mentioned. I get the impression that one of the most contentious elections in memory caused little conflict in Wayland, and that seems unlikely;

Bibliography:

Duffy, Margaret

Fabiansson, Charlotte

Garcia, Carlos

Hennessy, Michael

Hyvonen, Shelby Louise

Kurien, Prema


Logan, Ryan

Roby, John
Friday, November 11, 2016 How we Voted: Trump Strong Upstate, Won 46 Counties. In Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, edited by Karen Magnuson, pp. 9A

Sandoval, Juan Simón Onésimo

Ziegahn, L

United States Census Bureau
Written Reflection:

“The camera reflects the filmmaker's view” (Sherman 1998: 207). This was the essence of my film. I wanted to show how the 2016 presidential race was affecting the community of Wayland. I tended to show how the community was coming together in support of Trump in both my narration as well as the people I chose to interview. My film and my written portion neglected to show the small portion of the community that broke from the rest in support of Clinton. This was a result of my interviews showing those in the community who were solely Trump supporters as well as my own political views working their way into the film. I would have liked to have incorporated an interview that showed the other small portion of the community that was in support of Clinton but I could not find any one that would be willing to sit down with me for an interview. In terms of style, I chose a narrative/observational form to best convey the subject matter. I believe that this style was very successful in getting my point across and showing the community dynamics while at the same time, it allowed the audience to get a better understanding of the type of town Wayland is. Nothing more than just a small farming community. However, I do believe that the narration part of the film did take away from the interviews more than what I would have liked. I would have liked to have shown more of my interview time to give the audience a better understanding of what the community members themselves thought about the topic. I believe that my film was more useful in conveying the information than the written component was. One thing that I put into my written portion that I would have liked to put into my film, was the topic of trust amongst community members and who they chose to support. Overall, the issue of trust forced many members to back up Trump over Clinton. However, only the written portion showed this. The written portion also looked closer at other small groups in the nation and how they act politically in situations. My film focused entirely on Wayland. Over all, I think that my film was a success in showing the communities reaction towards the 2016 presidential race. If I had to do the project again, I think I would incorporate more of the interview time that I had done, as well as introduce the other small side of the community that split from the rest.

Work Cited:

Sherman, S.R.