

Everyday Party Politics: Local volunteers and professional organizers in grassroots campaigns

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Declaration

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I declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work, and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Elizabeth H. Super

Abstract

The decline in traditional methods of civic engagement is a cause for concern in many Western democracies. Similarly, studies of American party politics point to a transformation from locally-based volunteer organizations to national ones assisting candidate-centered, professionally-run campaigns, leaving little room for volunteer participants. This thesis analyses the recent resurgence of grassroots participation and organization in the United States. Using interpretive methods, I present a study of grassroots participants in Massachusetts Democratic Party primary campaigns in 2006. Primary documents, interviews with volunteers and paid members of field staff, and observations of canvassing work all detail the personal and organizational contexts of participation, illuminating the meanings individuals found in campaign work.

Grassroots participation takes place in a loosely organized set of candidate-based campaigns, local party committees, and civic spheres. When participants first engage in this environment, they become socialized into a community with learned norms, practices, and ways of knowing. While those interviewed shared some of the motivations of party activists in previous studies, the motives and beliefs described by both professional organizers and volunteers were less policy focused than expected, and blurred the distinction between ideological and social categories. Indeed, while organizers and volunteers build distinct identities through their campaign participation, they share many more similarities than the literature on activism and professionalism in parties would suggest.

Participants also serve a crucial role as translators between party elites and their fellow citizens, with important implications for linkage and the problem of decoupling. Rather than a return to traditional methods and structures of political engagement, the participants observed take part in and are building communities which have much in common with new forms of non-traditional participation. These findings contribute to the development of party organization theories and point towards the need for greater dialogue between scholars of party politics, organizational studies, and civic engagement.

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Preface

On 3 November 2004 I sat in Faneuil Hall, Boston, and watched John Kerry, the Democratic candidate for President of the United States of America, deliver his concession speech after losing the election to George W. Bush. Exhausted and drained, I had walked over to Faneuil Hall with my fellow Kerry-Edwards campaign staff members who had made it to the office, and earlier that morning were busy answering the phone calls that came flooding in from all over the country as Democrats begged, pleaded, and demanded that Kerry contest the results in Ohio. Now I was crying on the shoulder of a woman who I did not even know, a staffer from another office who had also not slept in about three weeks and could only pat my hand and tell me that it would be all right – we did everything we could do to get him elected. It was a cathartic release after two of the most intense months I had ever experienced working on the Democratic nominee’s presidential campaign.

Throughout that time, I was introduced to a world I previously had no idea existed. My job, as part of a team of fellow full time staffers, was organizing hundreds and then thousands of Massachusetts citizens to call, canvass, and volunteer in order to mobilize votes for Kerry in swing states, particularly New Hampshire and the Maine Second Congressional District. When I got back to the office late on election night, having been up in New Hampshire helping out with get out the vote (GOTV) efforts during the day, my friend Tom proudly reported that they had so many people show up to make get out the vote calls that there was actually nowhere left to sit in the entire building-wide office. Volunteers were making calls on their cell phones standing in the lobby, the stairwell, outside the front door, and even in the elevator. By the end of the day volunteers were still calling Hawaii, and our phone bank had made more than 100,000 GOTV calls in a single day.

Nothing prepared me for the many people I would meet who devoted their time, energy and passion to trying to get Kerry elected that year. Nor could anything have prepared me for the excitement and the sense that something new was brewing from

that experience, not just for me but for the many other volunteers, canvassers and staff members who were mobilized – some for the first time, some again after a long period away from politics, and some after steady years of experience. I did not know what, but something was going on, and I wanted to find out more. What was all this grassroots participation? And what did it look like from the viewpoint of those who were actually doing it? This latter question would become the primary one for my PhD, and the one that I address in this thesis.

In addition to staying involved in the world of Democratic campaigning in Boston, Massachusetts, I began reading more about political participation. When I found copies of the just-published American Political Science Association report at my local bookstore on the state of political participation in America, published in late 2005, I eagerly picked it up to find out how the academy addressed this question of what participation is and what was currently happening with it. Imagine my surprise then when, upon turning to the first page, I read that “American democracy is at risk” because people just weren’t participating the way they used to (Macedo et al 2005: 1). Clearly, something did not add up between what I was reading and what I was doing.

Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the American Political Science Association report on political participation, American democracy is at risk because “Americans have turned away from politics and the public sphere in large numbers, leaving our civic life impoverished. Citizens participate in public affairs less frequently, with less knowledge and enthusiasm, in fewer venues, and less equally than is healthy for a vibrant democratic polity” (Macedo et al 2005: 1).

Yet the 2004 presidential election demonstrated that Americans were coming to the polls, they were reading the news and participating in public affairs with a passion. In 2004 one could find any number of problems regarding the long term health of the nation to be unhappy about, but the lack of citizen engagement as indicated by the presidential election was surely not one of them. Indeed, the authors of *Democracy at Risk* noted that there did appear to be an uptick in reading the news and paying attention to politics immediately following September 11th, and marginal increase in traditional forms of political participation such as voter and campaign participation. But this tentative acknowledgement was only a pause before detailing the myriad of problems with civic engagement at almost every level.

More puzzling was the fact that there was very little attention paid in *Democracy at Risk* to political organizations, and especially parties. While there is an entire chapter devoted to ‘Associational life and the nonprofit and philanthropic sector,’ there is no entry for ‘political parties,’ ‘Democratic Party,’ or ‘Republican Party’ in the index. Nor are there entries for campaign organizations, so that while considerable attention is devoted to levels of voter turnout, the length of the campaign season, campaign finance (which is listed in the index), and a host of institutional factors such as the electoral college and voter registration laws, there is almost no account given of parties or campaigns – perhaps the single most visible kind of ‘political organization’ in America. Further, among the seventeen listed recommendations of how to fix declining citizen participation in elections, none address what political organizations could do, and only three indirectly – by way of talking about processes – indicate

where political organizations might fit in. How is it that a book published by leading political scientists and devoted to the issue of declining political and civic participation can not talk about the organizations in which participation takes place? Ostensibly, participating in a campaign requires at least a modicum of organization in order for people to have something to participate *in*. But such dimensions do not appear, except in passing reference, in *Democracy at Risk*.

The volume may be but one publication of many on political participation, but this omission of political organizations, and especially party organizations, is symptomatic of the way questions about political participation are treated in general. The paradox is that while political scientists may be deeply concerned about the state of political participation in the present day, current research agendas do not always, or even frequently, address the role of party and campaign organizations with respect to questions about civic and political participation.¹ Conversely, while research on political parties is increasingly turning back towards questions regarding rank-and-file membership and participation, these questions are often framed without reference to broader debates on the healthiness of political participation in society.² And while studies of campaigning tactics have more recently begun to address both the effects and normative questions regarding voter turnout, these studies, by the very experimental design which makes their results so strong, do not really focus on campaigning or party organizations either.³ Rather than a gap in the field, then, this omission would seem to be a gap *between* different fields of research.

The literature that does specifically address participation in collective political organizations, like parties, is often equally concerned with the question of declining participation and the attendant long-term health of party organizations which rely on member resources, yet this discussion happens almost in parallel to the question of civic decline. Thus whilst party membership (where applicable) and campaign

¹ The same omission of either party organizations or campaign organizations in work addressing political and/or civic decline can be found in Putnam (2000); Skocpol and Fiorina (1999); Crenson and Ginsberg (2000); Cramer Walsh (2004); and Dalton (1996).

² E.g. Bennie (2004); Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992, 1995); Scarrow (1996); Seyd and Whitely (1992, 2002); Whitely and Seyd (1998); Whitely Seyd and Richardson (1994)

³ E.g. Bergan, Gerber and Green (2005); Gerber, Green and Schachar (2003); Gerber and Green (2000, 2001); Green and Gerber (2004); Green, Gerber and Nickerson (2003); Nickerson (2005, 2006, 2007); Nickerson, Friedrich and King (2006); Vavreck, Spilotes and Fowler (2002).

activism is held up as proof of declining participation, the relationship between party organizational decline and civic decline is rarely discussed.

Further, this research on participation in collective political organizations is primarily shaped through rational choice frameworks, in which the costs of participation are weighed against its benefits, is hugely influential in the research on active participation in collectives, such as party organizations. But rational choice may be so successful that the limitations of this approach are now more glaring than the parsimonious benefits its authors first brought forth. Rational choice theory has become so dominant that alternative explanations or research agendas are either squeezed into a rational choice framework when they may better be left outside it, or are not researched altogether.

One of the omissions that may partially be tied to the predominance rational choice-based research is a focus on participation as a practice. Because in rational choice the issue of participation is framed as one of deciding whether or not to invest resources (time, energy, or money) into collective action in order to receive the benefits, ‘participation’ is conceptualized as an equation. This leaves the actual act of participating as an under-theorized middle that is of relatively little interest, except as it relates to the conception of costs and benefits. Setting the practice of participation in the theoretical background means that questions which arise from practice are harder to access and even harder to research. Questions which look at how people think, do, act, and interact as part of the practice of participation find less room in rational choice – unless, of course, these dimensions can either be translated into costs or benefits.

Why bother asking about the practice of participation at all? First of all, asking about practice without limiting the question to costs or benefits opens up enquiry into how participants themselves think about participation along other dimensions – meaning, knowing, and ways of doing. Second, asking about practice re-contextualizes participation. While questions about costs and benefits can often be phrased in abstract language, discussing participation as practice and how people practice it necessitates explaining and understanding the context in which it is practiced. Taken together then, practice is people doing concrete things in concrete contexts.

As in the tradition of theorizing from empirical research, I believe that asking about these additional dimensions of participation can result in a fuller understanding of what the concept of political participation entails and how it may be different in different contexts. By asking ‘what does participation look like from your point of view?’ we may be able to go on to understand how people’s understanding of participation varies across experiences and contexts. Rather than a presumed universal conception of participation in terms of the costs and benefits, we may better understand the circumstances under which people think about their participation rationally, strategically, culturally, personally, or through any other set of interpretations. Practice refocuses the analytical lens on how people experience participation and the context in which it is experienced.

Asking about practice necessarily involves moving beyond the analytical toolbox provided in rational choice theory or purely instrumental frameworks, and therefore in this thesis I use an interpretative approach to understanding participation. More specifically, I draw on the research and tools developed through interpretative theory and research, which requires the researcher to “grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman 2008: 16). An interpretative approach assumes not that there is one objective truth, but that research should aim to uncover the meanings which individuals construct, share, and take for granted through their everyday lives and activities. This is well suited to asking questions about how people experience participation, and for the purpose of *understanding* as part of the process of theorization. Of course, not all studies of participation in political organizations are done within a rational choice framework, and I draw from alternative sources on participation where relevant. But one of the key advantages of an interpretative approach is that it provides a coherent body of research and attendant methods to work with.

Asking about participation as a practice in context also addresses the issue of re-introducing political organizations back into the debate about civic engagement more broadly. From the perspective of participants, as I will show, it is not so easy to create a prophylactic boundary between political party participation, on the one hand, and civic participation on the other. Participation-as-practice shows up the divisions

created in the research on political engagement, and offers a way to bring disparate fields of enquiry back into the same academic conversation.

In order to study participation as practice, one needs people doing real things in real contexts. In this thesis, I use a case study of grassroots workers – both volunteers and field organizers⁴ – participating in the Massachusetts Democratic Party primary election campaigns⁵ in 2006. Massachusetts presented the opportunity to work with a relatively concentrated body of grassroots volunteers and campaign organizers, many of whom had recent experience on the 2004 presidential campaigns and were currently involved in state-level politics. One of the benefits of this case study was competitive primary elections to be the Party’s choice for Governor and Lieutenant Governor, as well as competitive primaries in down-ticket races. Unlike so many electoral campaigns in the US where incumbency is the deciding factor, the extent to which these races were open meant there was a spirited electoral season involving significant grassroots campaigning by multiple candidate and party campaign organizations. In many ways, the case of participants in Massachusetts Democratic Party primary campaigns is not representative of all participants in all parts of the US, or even all parts of the Democratic Party – but the reasons which made it non-representative are also the reasons which make it a useful case for the studying how people practice participation on an everyday basis.

Box 1.1 summarizes the research question, aims, approach, and case. In this chapter, I will first expand on the primary paradoxes, laid out above, and articulate subsidiary research questions in greater detail. For each research question, I will contrast one common way of framing the issue with an interpretative alternative, which will be sketched out in greater detail below. Finally, I finish by highlighting key contributions this thesis will make to discussions about political participation, party organizations, organizations and learning.

⁴ Note that “worker” is meant as a generic term for anyone who does work in a political campaign. This study is concerned with different worker roles in the field division of campaigns – “volunteers” and “field organizers.” These terms will be discussed in more depth in the coming chapters.

⁵ In Massachusetts (as in many other states), Democratic Party candidates for office in the general election are selected via an open primary election. The Democratic Party primary election in 2006 took place on 19 September.

Box 1.1 Research Question, Aims, Approach and Case

Research Questions: How do campaign volunteers and workers understand their own political participation? What do participants do when they are participating?

Aims: To reach a greater understanding of how participants understand their own participation. To use these understandings to build a more complete theorization of 'participation.' To identify key contextual dimensions of participation for future research.

Strategy: Interpretative, as especially developed in policy analysis.

Case: Grassroots volunteers and workers in the 2006 Massachusetts Democratic Party primary campaigns.

The problem of civic decline – and transformation

By the mid 1990s, something like a consensus was developing among scholars of civic participation that was not unlike the consensus developing among party scholars: civic life and participation was in a crisis. This is the consensus that is captured in *Democracy at Risk*, and the main components of this narrative are now widely familiar. Compared to mid-twentieth century activity, fewer people were voting, campaigning, reading the newspapers, talking about politics, joining political parties, staying members of cross-class civic organizations, or even bowling (Putnam 2000). While most pronounced and researched in the US, other western democracies were experiencing broadly similar trends (Dalton 1996). The decline is most marked for face-to-face activities which are most productive of social capital, leading to a whole host of civic ills beyond the mere lack of participation: declining trust in political institutions, disappearing bonds between citizens, and between citizens and elites.

Yet almost immediately, other scholars pointed out that the story was slightly more complicated, and may not be so much a case of decline as transformation. While recognizing the decline of some activities like voting, Dalton (1996: 51) pointed out that participation in campaigns actually held steady. Macedo et al (2005: 27-28) use

the declining number of high school seniors thought they may get involved in campaign work as an indicator of declining campaign participation, but Dalton points out that if political contributions to campaigns and campaign work are taken together, campaign participation stays at the same rate. So part of the issue is that the ways in which people take part in politics are changing: it is not just a decline in face-to-face participation, but an attendant rise in ‘checkbook’ participation. This trend is worrisome in its own right for some scholars of participation, as Crenson and Ginsberg argue that such forms of thin democracy (Barber 1984) do not include the vital elements of influence, knowledge, and engagement that face-to-face participation involve (Crenson and Ginsberg 2000).

Theda Skocpol documents a similar concern in the changing civic organizational membership patterns of elected state and local representatives (Skocpol 2003). The decline of cross-class, mass member civic organizations such as veteran’s groups, Elks Lodges, and the Loyal Order of Moose, meant that citizens had fewer chances to rub shoulders with their elected state and local representatives, or to participate in national organizations with the capability of lobbying the federal government over issues which concerned them (Skocpol 2003, 2005, Skocpol et al 1999). The subsequent rise in the number of management-based organizations or non-profits aimed at lobbying the federal government and providing social services in the mid-twentieth century filled part of the organizational void left by disappearing Elks Lodges, but with two important differences. First, these new organizations presented fewer opportunities for cross-class engagement, and elite actors, such as legislators, had fewer chances to hear directly from constituents and fellow citizens who were more ‘ordinary’ in terms of their socio-economic status. Similarly, those ‘ordinary’ citizens had fewer opportunities to interact with political elites and to lobby representatives directly and on their own behalf.

Second, the shift in focus to government lobbying and applications to federal funds was undertaken by ‘professional’ staff and boards of directors meaning that fewer citizens were actually participating and interacting with government. When professionals undertake the lion’s share of the work interacting with government, there are that many fewer citizens who participate.

In all of these cases, what appears to be happening is not that civic engagement has simply stopped, but it has changed in ways which are important in terms of our understanding of what counts as meaningful participation for democracy. The activities have changed from social capital-rich face-to-face interactions to social capital-poor check writing. Where the organizations are the same, as the campaign example shows, the circumstances have changed, with some negative implications for political participation. It is not just about whether people vote or not, or canvass or not, but *how* they participation that matters.

Even still, these accounts only tell one part of the story. At the same time that participation in traditional activities like voting and associational organization membership are declining, participation in some traditional forms like donating money to political campaigns are and in non-traditional are increasing. In her cross-national comparison of political participation, Pippa Norris (2002) argues that actually what is happening is a broader shift towards new, non-traditionalist forms of participation. Importantly, this model of changing participation takes into account the changing political world in which participation takes place. States and government are not the same in the 1990s as they were in the 1950s and 1960s: between globalization of trade and the civil rights movement, the structures which citizens attempt to exercise influence through participation are changing too. So why should participation stay the same? The emphasis here – and it is one that Dalton (2008) similarly makes in his account of changing citizenship norms – is that people adapt their forms of participation to meet the changing macro-contexts of participation.

In their work on participation (each somewhat independently), David Marsh and Henrik Bang, each with their co-authors, take this argument of change and participation one step further to argue that the entire notion of what counts as political needs to be re-assessed. Marsh, O'Toole and Jones (2007) emphasize the different notions of what counts as political among young people, and especially differences among ethnic minorities and across class lines. What appears political to the young people they spoke with – non-white and white citizens interacting in everyday social settings, such as a doctor's office – does not fit into the traditional notions of what counts as political acts. Therefore, the traditional definitions of

political participation miss out on important aspects of participation today and may emphasize decline over transformation. By looking at those everyday activities, contexts and acts which are not state-focused but *understood* as political by the people in their study, Marsh, O'Toole and Jones show how the concept of political participation itself is changing.

Similarly, Henrik Bang argues that the shift away from government and towards governance shapes the space for participation in important ways. Drawing from their study of 'Democracy from below' in Denmark, Bang and Sorensen sketch out two new identities for political participation, the 'Expert Citizen' and the 'Everyday Maker' (Bang 2004, 2005, Bang and Sorensen 2001). The 'Expert Citizen' is like Crenson's or Skocpol's professional in that they take part as full-time employees of organizations that are part of elite governance networks. 'Everyday Makers', on the other hand, have built their identity in response to governance networks and challenge Expert Citizens to stay connected to the world of everyday life and politics (Bang 2004). Rather than focusing exclusively on the state or on formal channels of influence, Everyday Makers emphasize thinking globally and acting locally (Bang and Sorensen 2001).

While these latter examples are drawn from UK, European and comparative research, they are crucial developments in recognizing the changing profiles of the people who participate and the contexts of participation. And while Norris and Bang emphasize the changes in macro-structures, Bang also (along with Marsh et al) highlight how people may perceive or construct the narratives of their own participation, or their own accounts of 'political', which differ from the accepted definitions of these concepts. Taken all together, this debate about the decline or transformation of civic and political participation serves to highlight the importance of the *form* that participation takes for broader normative assessments. Does it matter how people practice participation – if it is professional or volunteer, if it is state focused or society focused? And what do these different categories of 'volunteer,' 'professional', 'state' or 'society' mean?

My first subsidiary research question addresses these issues. *What are the qualitative similarities and differences between different forms of participation, and how do*

these forms relate to broader changes in politics? Within my case study, I spoke to participants in a variety of roles within the division of grassroots field work campaigning. These roles can be broadly separated into grassroots volunteers and campaign staff field organizers, and I compare these two roles – volunteers and organizers – to draw out the questions of qualitative similarities and differences.

Party Organization: decline and transformation

At the same time as some researchers have been worried about civic decline, scholars of party politics have also been asking questions about party decline. Because these questions of party decline rest on particular conceptions of party organization, and because they highlight the paradoxes of participation in parties from which the research questions arise, I address the party decline thesis in detail here. While this thesis of party decline has some similarities with the civic decline thesis, rarely do the two narratives reference one another.

Parties are difficult to define, but generally fall into one of two categories: one that focuses on party structure, and one that focuses on party functions. The party structure tradition is best represented in V.O. Key's work identifying the three 'faces' of the party as the party in government, party in the electorate, and the party organization (Key 1964). Each face works in concert, and sometimes at odds with the other in a sort of loose coalition, coming together during key processes such as elections. Alternatively, parties are identified by the functions they fill in terms of the nomination of candidates for office, the running of elections, providing a platform or program of policies, and so on (Souraf and Beck 1988).

In the immediate postwar conception of American parties, the voluntary party organization was of chief importance, structured in a loosely decentralized, bottom-up system, responsible for running election campaigns. Unlike the mass party system that Michels (1949) identified in which power was centralized among a few party leaders and sub-leaders, Eldersveld identified in his study of the Democratic Party in Detroit, Michigan a much more decentralized, fragmented system of 'stratarchy' in which, contra Michels' few oligarchs with control lorded over the whole

organization, there were ‘little oligarchs’ in each town and county who were responsible for carrying out the party’s duties of selecting candidates and running campaigns (Eldersveld 1964: 99). These local party leaders did so with little to no central coordination, often working with the vestiges of the machine politics system and a network of volunteers loyal to the party’s aims of winning elections. The flow of resources, and thus influence, went from these decentralized and fragmented committees, to the state parties, who then passed financial resources on to a weak and relatively unimportant national committee (Kayden 1985: 4).

In hindsight, scholars of the party decline thesis emphasized that this system of running elections could work because the party in the electorate – the voters – had strong party attachments, based on ethnic ties to the parties and their previous social attachments (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). From this static notion of parties came several changes which shook the notion of parties as being relatively strong and stable. The party decline thesis, as it pertains to parties in the United States, is based largely on the consistent observation of three phenomena. First, the insurgence of issue activists into parties fueled speculation that they would no longer be able to perform their essential compromising function, and would fail to operate well in a left-right ideological continuum (Kirkpatrick 1976). Around the same time, the advent of the direct primary for the selection of all candidates robbed parties of one of their essential functions (Kayden 1985, Souraf and Beck 1988). Polling and survey research also showed a consistent decline in the number of voters who identified with a party: voters, it seems, were no longer that interested in parties (Wattenberg 1998: 3).

Finally, the advent of candidate centered campaigns, run by consultants and for-hire professionals replaced the traditional role of the party organization in running and staffing election campaigns. According to Wattenberg (2002: 66), Banfield and Wilson (1963) “were among the first to note the impact of technology on parties when they ascribed to television the weakening of the importance of an American precinct captain’s visits.” Just as the use of TV as a communication tool replaced face-to-face conversation with friends, neighbors, and family about politics, so too did the personnel for communicating with voters change, from precinct captains and

ward heelers to professional men and women schooled in the arts of TV advertising and polling. In this brave new world of candidate-centered campaigning, candidates were expected to build their own personal campaigns, relying on an “organization composed of friends, followers, and nonparty groups” (Souraf and Beck: 299). While local party organizations could offer assistance in terms of volunteers to do some of the door-knocking and such, these activities were largely extraneous – and so, too, were party organizations. As they no longer carried out the essential campaigning functions, having handed these over to the professional men and women who ran TV ad wars based on the use of sophisticated polling techniques and emphasized the candidate’s personal characteristics, party organizations no longer commanded a powerful role in the party (Brox and Shaw 2006).⁶ As Souraf and Beck note (1988: 299), these shifts in campaigning meant that the party was weaker both inside its own organization and out in the electorate. The result, as veteran political journalist David Broder declared in the title of his book, was clear: *The Party’s Over* (Broder 1972).

But this concept of decline was soon rivaled by another thesis – of party transformation. Local party organizations may not have played a key role in campaigns any more, but parties adapted through a process of nationalization and institutionalization. This transformation included several elements: the strengthening of the Democratic and Republican National Committees and changes in the finance laws and structures, the growth of the national and state party bureaucracies, and the continued relative unimportance of local party organizations and volunteers. All in all, the result was that party organizations transformed themselves from a largely mass-based, delegate style organization into a bureaucracy whose primary function and viability came from their role as “service organizations” to the candidates (Bibby 1994). The party was not over, just different.

As Xandra Kayden (1985) notes, in the post-reform era the Republican Party was much quicker than their Democratic counterparts to transition from a set of decentralized, loosely coordinated state and local organizations into a *national* institution. Coupled with changing finance laws and structures, bolstered National, Senate and Congressional (House) Campaign Committees began to take a larger role

⁶ There are those who note that party activists continued to play a crucial role in selecting candidates through the primaries (e.g., Aldrich 1995; Fiorina 2004).

in marshalling the ‘new’ resources candidates would need to run campaigns – polling, consultancy expertise, and money (Green 2006). The result was that while in previous years resources and influence flowed from the state parties to a weak national committee, now the arrows were reversed – resources, and therefore influence, flowed from the national party to the state organizations (Bibby 1994, Cotter and Bibby 1980, Jewell and Olson 1982, Kayden 1985). This change produced revitalized state parties that worked as service organizations, consisting of permanently staffed party headquarters. The ‘new’ party bureaucracy provided campaign trainings for candidates and organized local party volunteers into get-out-the-vote efforts as “auxiliaries” to the candidate’s campaigns (Herrnson 1994, Huckshorn and Bibby 1982: 99).

While this emphasis on the new party bureaucracy does include improved GOTV efforts in with the other services provided, on further examination the evidence seems somewhat more mixed. Kayden declares that “local parties, which were populated by volunteers, no longer play a strong role in American politics” (1985: 4). It is also important to note that the Democratic Party lagged behind the Republican Party through much of the 1980s and 1990s in its organizing efforts (Galvin 2008), so the extent to which party transformation and state party organization reorganization is linked to get-out-the-vote efforts depends in part on which party one uses as a data set or case study. For those concerned with the Democratic Party, like Weir and Ganz (1997), voter mobilization and grassroots efforts continued to be anemic through the mid-1990s.

Meanwhile, those professional men and women, especially those who could provide strategic advice, media training, research and polling, came to provide a more central and powerful role. They were the object of referral that party organizations would provide to new candidates. And as Johnston (2001) argues, they were the ones calling the shots. Even if there were volunteers doing some get-out-the-vote work, such activists were marginal campaign decision-making.

Taking the party decline and party transformation arguments together, it is clear that they highlight related changes in the party structures and processes. Indeed, as Schlesinger (1985) argues, it is the very weakness of the party in the electorate which

forced party organizations to become stronger, investing more resources in campaigning and turning out what little section of their core vote remained. While some, like Broder (1972) claimed that the party organization has completely fallen apart, this appears to refer to a specific section of the party organization – the traditional delegate system and voluntary organization – and a particularly bad point in time for the parties – the late 1960s and early 1970s. Those that point out the strength of the party organization highlight what grew afterwards – strong bureaucratic organizations which worked directly with the candidate campaign organizations. The only group to consistently lose out in all these changes thus appears to be the activists and participants involved at the local level. When consigned to party organizations, they play, at best, an auxiliary role. And while there are those “friends and supporters” who join a candidate’s campaign, most of the real work is done by professionals and consultants who devise strategy, undertake the important message crafting, and decide when and how it will be delivered through mass media (Norris 2000).

This, then, was the story - up until the present moment. As Galvin (2008) has argued, the Democratic Party invested money and time since the mid-1990s in rebuilding the state party organizations above and beyond what was being done in the 1980s. Thus, Howard Dean was able to capitalize on the investments of his predecessors in getting the party out of debt and building infrastructure by the time a wave of progressive sentiment swept him into the DNC Chairmanship in 2004. Since then, a very public debate has been unfolding as to the value of his 50-state strategy (Kamarck 2008), but the most important point here is that any gains in terms of a strong party organization at the state level has taken place within the context of an overall shifted landscape in which candidate campaign organizations and mass- or micro-targeted media have been considered the dominant way of running election campaigns.

Moreover, political campaigns have also been returning to the use of labor intensive ‘field work’ campaigns to identify and mobilize a candidate’s supporters (Brox and Shaw 2006). Indeed, this was the type of work I was involved in during the 2004 presidential campaign. Far from being exclusive to presidential politics, field work may be undergoing something of a revival at the state, local, and national level. For

the Democratic Party, this may be the combination of shifting strategies by candidates themselves and from longer term re-investment in state party organizations (Galvin 2008).

My first research question draws from this narrative of party organization decline, professionalization and revival, and then grassroots revival. The first concerns organization. If every candidate for the party (or candidate running for a spot on the party ticket) has their own campaign organization, and if party organizations are increasingly providing both professional and amateur participants for candidate campaigns, then it may be more a case of party organizations than a singular party organization. Thus, *what do party organizations look like from the viewpoint of grassroots participants?* If multiple organizations are involved in organizing and doing grassroots field work – i.e., identifying and mobilizing voters – then the question of organization necessitates further clarification. Asking ‘what is an organization?’ also implies that there may be more than one way to conceive it, and thus move beyond the solely instrumental and structural definitions of party organizations.

Parties and the civic-political research gap

In the same volume which draws out the account of changing forms of political participation from traditional to non-traditional, Pippa Norris identifies three different ‘levels’ of factors that are important for participation (Norris 2002). On the macro-level, the overall level of socioeconomic development as well as state institutions, constitution and electoral laws, and the party system can account for the variation between different quantities and forms of participation in different nation-states. On the micro-level, the motivations that people have for participation, the resources that are available – including time, money, access, education, and political interest – are all important determinants of participation. And on the meso-level are ‘mobilizing agencies’ – e.g. churches, unions, *parties*, movements and the media – which, when coupled with micro-factors, leads to certain levels and forms of political activism (Norris 2002: 20).

Using Norris' framework to read the layout of *Democracy at Risk* helps to clarify what the latter volume covers and excludes. *Democracy at Risk* focuses on those institutional and macro-factors, such as electoral laws and institutions (including the Electoral College), and it focuses on micro-factors, such as political interest, knowledge, and resources. In terms of meso-factors, however, it deals exclusively with the non-party 'agencies': unions, churches, nonprofit and charitable organizations. This excludes *both* social movements and party organizations.

Norris similarly distinguishes between parties and social organizations, separating the latter into associations (churches, unions, nonprofit organizations) and social movements. The important difference is that while Norris studies the latter two to ask questions about social capital, the study of political party membership is restricted to the question of 'who joins?' and 'why do people join parties?' These different research questions, between political parties, on the one hand, and social and civic associations and movements,⁷ on the other, make the theoretical treatment of meso-organizations that much less coherent.

Such a separation of political parties from civic concerns did not come about by accident, but grew out of, and in response to, the progressive reform movement of the early 20th century. For instance, Robert Putnam uses the example of turn-of-the-twentieth-century women's reading groups and temperance unions as important institutions which created social capital (Putnam 2000). These civic organizations are Putnam's ideal fountains of social capital, a kind of civic institution which produces trust and all sorts of other social goods. But as Clemens point out, these women's institutions were not just civic groups – they were very much political players of the day, lobbying government and mobilizing their members for political goals (Clemens 1999). Not only were they political, but they were also an important part of the progressive movement. One of the chief goals of the progressive movement was to reform city and state government institutions and breaks the power of political party machines. While anti-party sentiment is not exclusive to the US (Ware 2006), the particular development of scholarly research on direct democracy and citizen engagement does seem to follow the parameters set out during the progressive

⁷ Studies of social movements do often address the same questions of 'why do people join?', like the study of parties.

movement. In this sense, what Katz refers to as the conspicuous marginality and absence of political parties in the work on civic engagement and the “impact of democracy on the human development of citizens” is not at all surprising, but logical (Katz 2006: 42).

My next subsidiary research question is aimed at addressing this gap between studies of parties and studies of civic engagement. *Does participation in party campaigns produce democratic benefits similar to those theorized for civic engagement? If so, how?* If party organizations have undergone a series of changes in the past fifty years and those changes provide different opportunities for participation, then perhaps what is happening in parties is relevant for questions of civic engagement and decline. In answering this question, I will look at participation within the framework of focusing on the links between voters, participants, and elites that may be produced through grassroots field work.

Rational choice and the paradox of participation

By now, the essentials of a rational choice theory are so widely known that they need little introduction or elaboration. Yet at the time of publication, both Downs (1957) and Olson (1965) were arguing against the prevailing logic of a pluralist perspective which saw citizens ‘naturally’ collecting into groups in order to achieve collective goods (e.g. Truman 1951). Rational choice theory turned the study of participation on its head by using an economic model of human choice to show that participation in collective action was the *unnatural* choice. Any rational individual would choose to free ride and gain the benefits of collective action without having to expend any effort. By starting from the point that people are not inherently political but self-interested, Mancur Olson (1965) elegantly argued that without coercive methods on the part of the collective organization (such as the closed union shop), participation would not take place. By foregrounding the problems of collective action and the tendency for individuals to act selfishly, rational choice theory highlights the difficulties inherent in organizing for collective ends (Mansbridge 1990, 1995).

Rational choice theory has elicited as many critics as supporters, profoundly shaping the study of political participation. Even those who could in one sense be deemed critics go on to modify rational choice and incentives theory rather than reject it outright for the discussion of participation. Thus Terry Moe (1980) argues that Olson's almost exclusive focus on economic incentives offers a picture of only a sliver of human motivation, and then goes on to use the same basic concept but broaden the motivational spectrum to include beliefs and emotions as important for participation as well. Overall, this is the approach largely taken to explain why people participate in collective endeavors such as movements, parties, and organizations: a combination of incentives based on material benefits, ideological benefits, and process benefits (e.g. Katz 1990; Norris 2002; Seyd and Whitely 1992; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995 among others).

While rational choice then tends to frame and then answer one central paradox of participation – why do people participate against their own economic self-interest? – it also leaves other paradoxes untouched or, in some cases, creates new ones. The most important result of this framework with respect to the research agenda of this thesis is that by focusing on individuals as self-interested, instrumental, and rational, rational choice downplays the other ways that individuals are or may perceive themselves – as members of a collective group, as creators of inter-subjective meaning, and as producers and beneficiaries of collective knowledge, norms, practices and ways of doing participation.

This oversight can be demonstrated to turning back to Norris' micro-, meso-, and macro-level framework. The meso-level of 'agencies' ostensibly covers the role of parties, movements, and the like. Yet the discussion in the chapters on meso-level organizations still uses the rational choice incentives framework to ask why people get involved in participation. Thus instead of addressing what could be collective practices, patterns, understandings, or cultures, the 'meso' level chapters are devoted to explaining why individual participants take part in collective agencies. Even when authors such as Scarrow focus on what parties do, it is still within the rational choice framework and therefore focused on the provision of rewards for individual benefits.

This research is important and insightful in its own right, but it also represents a missed opportunity to discuss collective aspects of participation.

My final two subsidiary research questions address this oversight. *What meanings, as well as motives, do participants draw from participation? And how do participants learn to participate?* Each of these questions aims to access and understand those aspects of participation which exist intersubjectively and collectively and thus are outwith the ability of rational choice and incentives frameworks to fully explain.

To recap, I have identified two main research questions and five subsidiary research questions. These are summarized in Box 1.2. Each of the subsidiary questions articulates a specific dimension of looking at participation in practice and relates it to paradoxes or gaps between existing literature on political parties and participation.

Box 1.2 Primary and Subsidiary Research Questions

Primary research questions:

How do campaign volunteers and workers understand their own participation?

What do participants do when they are participating?

Subsidiary research questions:

What does party organization look like from the viewpoint of grassroots participants?

What meanings, as well as motives, do participants draw from participation?

How do participants learn to participate?

What are the qualitative similarities and differences between different forms of participation?

Does participation in party campaigns produce democratic benefits similar to those theorized for civic engagement? If so, how?

The plan for the thesis

The next chapter discusses the research design, including the research questions, aims, and strategy; the case study and criteria for assessment; and data collection and

analysis methods. Chapters three through seven present the primary analysis of data and research questions.

Chapter three begins by asking about party organization. Within the context of asking about participation, the interaction between individuals and organizations is framed as a solely instrumental relationship. Participants come to organizations in order to achieve their goals, and organizations attract members by providing incentives for participation. However, this seems to address only one way of imagining organization, and it does not take into account the actual fact of multiple grassroots organizations that participants take part in. Chapter three thus addresses the question of how participants perceive and take part in 'organization' at the grassroots level. I start by looking at participants accounts of the pathways they take into politics and the antecedents to participation, not in order to ask about motives but to ask about which grassroots organizations feature prominently in these experiences. I then look at participants' reports of organizational involvement over a longer period of time and sketch out a participatory context that consists of several organizations and personal networks spread over a period of involvement that may stretch beyond any one campaign season to months and even years. I finish by linking these experiences with a cultural view of organization which foregrounds the shared norms, practices, and knowledge that participants develop of the course of a career of participation. Using the question of first getting involved to discuss organization instead of individual motives presents an alternative to the usual construction of understanding motives as prior to political activity. In order to really understand why participants describe the motives they do and find participation meaningful, the reader must first know about, and understand, the context in which participation takes place.

Chapter four picks up where chapter three leaves off with the concept of joining an organizational culture. This chapter focuses specifically on the learning that takes place after participants have first joined, and can be built up through the practice of participation over one or several campaigns. While this issue of learning is theoretically included in the concept of socialization, I find scant empirical research on the issue of learning in political and party participation, owing in part to the way rational choice theory puts attitudes and motivations as the decisive factors over

other aspects of socialization. Therefore, chapter four aims to address this oversight and examine how participants collectively learn and know through practicing participation. I discuss the skills, training, and ways of knowing that participants develop which allows them to transition from first joining the community of practitioners to belonging to it. I build on the distinction between rational-scientific knowledge, on the one hand, and local-specific knowledge on the other, finding that volunteers and organizers have access to and emphasize different ways of knowing in their respective roles. However rather than being unrelated or oppositional ways of knowing, I return to the voter list as an artifact to emphasize the connections between these ways of knowing. Furthermore, the list serves as an underdetermined 'boundary object' in which participants can interact with the same object in different ways according to their needs.

In chapter five, I address the motives and meanings that participants find in and through practicing grassroots campaign participation. The chapter starts by looking at the incentives framework in greater detail and how some of the specific critiques about rational choice translate into problems of concept validity in empirical research. Essentially, the problems with conceiving influence outlined in rational choice theories of collective action, and the general inability of such theories to account for collective dimensions of experience, skew the categories used to summarize the reasons participants give and either reduce whole concepts to parts that lose some of their explanatory value, or overlook the ways in which participants distinguish between short-term collective goals and long-term, enduring beliefs and values about political participation. With these problems in mind, I report on the meaning and gratifications that participants discussed as part of the reason for their participation. Rather than fitting some reasons into ill-suited incentives categories, however, I build categories from the specific reasons participants report. I argue that the categories used to summarize participants' motivations should account for the way in which participants distinguish and identify doing short term collective goals, and should not try to squeeze shared collective beliefs and ideas about the good life into a narrower conception of 'policy outcomes.' Rather recognizing how these beliefs shape ideas about life well beyond the narrow political arena.

In chapter six, I come back to the broader question of what field work canvassing and participation produce that may be of relevance for debates about civic and political participation. Using the concept of ‘linkage’, I outline how grassroots party members and volunteers are often described as having a key function to fill in linking party elites with less engaged voters and citizens. Once again, however, the use of a rational choice theory framework limits the conception of linkage to an exclusively instrumental relationship or concept of exchange, whereby voters and grassroots party members convey their policy choices to elites, who then act on those choices in order to receive support from the grassroots. I argue that this ‘thin’ notion of linkage misses out on the ways in which face-to-face interactions are productive of trust and political solidarity between voters, campaign participants, and elites. I return to the concept of the practice and skills of participation to discuss how participants actively endorse and promote political elites, represent those elites among citizens, and translate broad and abstract policy positions into concrete, real, and immediate implications for everyday life. In the accounts of participants, this process both uses and produces trust between campaign participants and voters, and contributes to a sense of building a collective political community. I argue that this trust and collective *political* community is a form of political solidarity that is distinct from the concept of trust and *social* community used in the debates about civic engagement and social capital. As such, political solidarity can be understood as part of a ‘thick’ linkage between citizens and elites, and which campaign participants play a key role in producing.

Chapter seven addresses the common distinction between vocation from avocation in political participation. While heuristically useful and the basis upon which many empirical research endeavors limit their sample of participation – and hence the range of experiences which qualify as ‘participation’ – I argue that the separate treatment of professional and amateur participation misses the commonalities between the two groups. Further, these profiles of participatory types are crucially linked to the models of parties or political systems in which the participation takes place. As such in order for the types to be understandable one also needs an understanding of the organizational model. Without it, the abstracted ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ type loses its conceptual value. I thus use chapter seven to present a summary of the data

on what qualitative similarities and differences were found between organizers and volunteers. I connect these observations with the possibility of a changing model of party organization emerging in the Democratic Party, and finish by discussing the implications of these new forms and organizational models for civic engagement.

In sum, in each of these chapters I review one of the predominant ways of addressing a key issue regarding participation, discuss the shortcomings, and offer an alternative way of approaching the issue. Where party organization is viewed as solely a matter of instrumental relations, I emphasize the cultural and collective dimensions of organization. Where the literature on party socialization misses out on collective ways of learning and knowing, I fill this gap and show how participation is a form of expert practice. Where incentives models of participation are limited in their ability to account for collective beliefs and (ironically) instrumental action for discrete collective ends, I retool the categorical frameworks to take account of these dimensions. Where the concept of linkage is limited to an instrumental view with no relation to the questions and literature on civic engagement, I flesh out a concept of ‘thick’ linkage with important implications for the debates and issues in civic engagement. While the professional and amateur are useful heuristics, I point out the importance of understanding the link between the type of participation and the model of organization in which it takes place in.

Taken together, rather than viewing participation as solely organizationally-bounded, state oriented, instrumental and individually motivated, I present a conception of participation that emphasizes how it is networked, collective, learned, meaningful, expert, citizen-oriented, productive and contextually situated. The participation and organization of political parties, including campaigning organizations has important consequences for questions regarding civic decline. Participation in party activities may produce connections between campaign workers, voters and elites that addresses the problem of frayed links between citizens and elites. And the changes in the forms and arrangement of participation presently happening in grassroots campaigns problematizes the association of professionalization with civic decline, instead indicating that it is the broader ways in which participants in all forms work together and organize which is important for civic questions. In chapter eight I elaborate on

this distinction from the material in each of the chapters, and point to where these observations and analysis may lead to new lines of enquiry in future research.

Chapter 2: Research Design

In this chapter I present my research design. Yin describes research design as “the action plan for getting from here to there” (1984: 28). This includes the research questions, aims, strategy, and methods. I begin by recapping the research questions and elaborating on the research aims outlined in the introductory chapter. How do campaign volunteers and field organizers understand their own participation? What do participants do when they participate? These questions have the aim of *understanding* the views and experiences of participants, and are further linked to theory generation about political participation. I will adopt an interpretive and constructivist position in approach this research, and use a case study of participation in Massachusetts Democratic primary campaigns. I discuss the implications of this choice of case study for generalizability, and discuss further assessment of the reliability, credibility, and ethical issues regarding the trustworthiness of the research. I then present the research methods used, including using a multi-method approach, stages of the data collection, interviewing technique and sampling, and data analysis techniques. I finish with a discussion of ethical issues and implications for research participants.

Research questions and aims

Box 2.1 restates the primary and subsidiary research questions. All of the research questions are phrased as either ‘what’, or ‘how’ questions. *How* do participants understand their own participation, and in *what* do they do when they participate? The focus on ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions will have important implications for the research design. Compared to ‘why’ or ‘how much’ questions, the emphasis is on the social world of grassroots campaign participants and how they experience it.

Thus the aim of the research questions is ‘reason’ explanation and understanding of grassroots participation. Blaikie defines explanation as “making intelligible the events or regularities that have been observed and which cannot be accounted for in

existing theories” (2000:74). ‘Reason’ explanation is understanding arrived at by exploring the reasons people give for their actions. Unlike causal explanations, reason explanations work with and from the world view of actors or an inside view, like Weber’s concept of *Verstehen* (Blaikie 2000: 75, Bryman 2008: 16). In other words, reason explanation, or understanding, asks about the interpretations which social actors provide about their world.

These research aims of explanation and understanding stem from two related motives. The first is, as described in the last chapter, the desire to better understand and explore what was (to me) an entirely new social and political world. The sense that something very timely was happening with Democratic Party political campaigning was exciting, new, and very immediate in a way that I was fascinated by. It is almost possible to identify a campaign office by its very smell – part pizza, part donuts, part sweat and part collective stress – and seemed to me intrinsically worthy of study.

Box 2.1 Primary and Subsidiary Research Questions

Primary research questions:

How do campaign volunteers and workers understand their own participation?

What do participants do when they are participating?

Subsidiary research questions:

What does party organization look like from the viewpoint of grassroots participants?

What meanings, as well as motives, do participants draw from participation?

How do participants learn to participate?

What are the qualitative similarities and differences between different forms of participation?

Does participation in party campaigns produce democratic benefits similar to those theorized for civic engagement? If so, how?

More broadly, my aim of understanding how abstract political concepts like ‘participation’ are constructed by people through their everyday experiences and understanding extends to contributing to discussions about what these political concepts mean in their scholarly contexts. Rather than just leaving such research on topics that were intrinsically worthy (to my mind) as its own piece, connecting an understanding of everyday politics with the academic theories is an important motive, and thus the aim of the thesis as a whole.

Research strategy

In order to achieve these research aims and answer the research questions, I adopt a strategy that is somewhat broadly referred to as ‘qualitative’ but more specifically is interpretive and constructivist. ‘Qualitative’ research is often used in so many different ways as to be somewhat imprecise, sometimes referring to just data collection methods, such as open ended or semi structure interviews, or sometimes refers to the ontological and epistemological standpoint of the researcher. Indeed, as Bryman points out, the sheer volume of texts on qualitative research makes it difficult to even pin down one ‘qualitative research strategy’ (2008: 366). More specifically, then, I outline the epistemological and ontological stances adopted in this research which are often correlated with ‘qualitative research.’

The first conflation comes is between qualitative research and an interpretative approach. Broadly speaking, an interpretative approach “requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman 2008: 16). In more accessible language, the work of interpretative approach is the interpretation of interpretations (Freeman 2008) – by research informants, by academic and research texts, and by researchers themselves. This contrasts the positivist presumption of only one analysis with the possibility of many analyses. Interpretative researchers work across the social science disciplines, and are increasingly contributing to policy and political studies.

While spread across many disciplines and adopting a variety of different methods, Wedeen identifies four characteristics that all interpretativists share in common.

First, all “question ‘the power presumed to accompany... science’” (Wedeen 2004: 284, citing Foucault). In order to create powerful explanations of social reality, alternative methodologies to the positivist tradition are necessary. Second, interpretativists are interested in language and symbolic systems, e.g. culture (Wedeen 2004: 284). Blaikie identifies this interest in language and symbolic systems as a focus on the intersubjective meanings people create through interaction in the social world (Blaikie 2000: 115). Third, they are constructivists in the sense that they view the world in which these meanings are created as socially made, “so that the categories, presuppositions, and classifications referring to particular phenomena are manufactured rather than natural” (Wedeen 2004: 284). Finally, they collectively eschew the individualist orientation of the behavioral and traditional rational choice approaches to research⁸, instead advocating for the necessity of understanding individuals within their social context.

These general characteristics of an interpretative approach are useful in highlighting the common commitments and similarities between researchers, but they mask vast differences of beliefs and opinion regarding the use of scientific methods, theory building, and the relationship to other methodologies. Like Wedeen, I believe there is a strong case to be made for methodological pluralism. Behavioralist and rational choice accounts of social reality are incomplete, but they provide useful knowledge as part of the social scientific endeavor that is beyond the scope of interpretive work (Wedeen 2004: 284). Ultimately methodological pluralism can enhance our understanding of such broad topics like ‘participation.’ Indeed, in focusing on understanding everyday meanings, in the theory building components of the thesis I compare and contrast these with generalizations and theoretical accounts of participation from rational choice, and in some cases building on these concepts rather than rejecting them outright.

In this thesis I use an abductive research strategy, which Blaikie identifies as a kind of inductive research strategy. The inductive approach poses a different relationship

⁸ Some posit that such a criticism engages with a ‘straw man,’ in that very few contemporary rational choice scholars adhere to the original concept of people as self-interested, utility-maximizing individuals. Indeed, Ferejohn, in the same volume as Wedeen, argues that rational choice theory is in itself the articulation of a particular world view and constructed social reality, one shared by informants and researchers alike (Ferejohn 2004).

between theory and practice than the deductive approach (Bryman 2008: 11). The latter starts with theory and then moves to observations and research findings in order to judge hypotheses. On the other hand, an inductive approach starts with observations and findings, and conceptualizing theory from this is the purpose of research. Of course, as Bryman (2008) notes, a deductive approach uses research results in order to come back to theory in the end, and often times an inductive approach may include data, theory, and then more data collection again.

An abductive research strategy is much more oriented towards understanding the experiences of people than the broader inductive approach. “It is the everyday beliefs and practices, mundane and taken for granted, which have to be grasped and articulated by the social researcher in order to provide an understanding of these [social] actions” (Blaikie 2000: 115). Lay meanings and socially constructed accounts are elevated to the central location in an abductive approach to social research and theory (Blaikie 2000: 115), although researchers differ on the ways in which lay meanings should be related to theory.

Interpretative approaches also share some common methods and commitments with grounded theory. Grounded theory “gives the researcher a specific set of steps to follow that are closely aligned with the canons of ‘good science’” (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: xviii) and departs from other interpretive approaches in that there is an explicit commitment to theory development and verification. This accurately describes the approach to the relationship between science, theory, data, and interpretation that I take in the thesis. Although grounded theory varies somewhat from the strong hermeneutic foundations of the abductive research strategy, Blaikie accepts that grounded theory can be used within the abductive strategy, and generally accommodates his desire for theory building (2000: 70). Described as within the sensitizing tradition, grounded theory is akin to an ongoing conversation between existing theory and the accounts which emerge from data. It combines the “concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data with some existing ones that are clearly useful” (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 48). Concepts are loosely described at the beginning of the research process, and re-evaluated and refined throughout the steps of data collection and analysis.

One important distinguishing feature of grounded theory is the source of concepts and theories and the role of the researcher as interpreter. In the hermeneutic and other interpretive traditions, concepts and theory are exclusively derived through exploring the everyday lay meanings which people use (Blaikie 2000: 138). In contrast, in grounded theory “the concept is the researcher’s” (Blaikie 2000: 138). The researcher will rely on the everyday meanings people create to build concepts and theory, but ultimately, conceptual development and even naming is clearly within the researcher’s remit, not exclusively bound to the lay, everyday meanings and language.

Case Study

In this thesis, the case is the participation in Massachusetts Democratic Party grassroots primary campaigns, where, for the purposes of focusing the scope of analysis, participation is operationalized as the act of attending one or more events organized by the Massachusetts Democratic Party or a candidate competing in a 2006 Democratic primary election. This operationalization concept is markedly different than the sensitizing one I propose as one of the main research processes in the thesis, and the distinction is simply that the research must start somewhere. In order to sensitize, it helps to start with a thin definition of the concept, which is sensitized throughout the research process (Blaikie 2000: 137).

While some authors like Yin (1984) argue that the case studies must be temporally and organizationally bounded entities, or Blaikie, who defines the case study as a social unit that must be treated as a whole (2000: 215), others are less strict. Mitchell offers a broader definition of the case study as simply the observer’s data (1983: 191), and Stake describes the case as the choice of object of study (1998: 86). By defining the case as participation in Massachusetts Democratic Party primary grassroots political campaigns, I use a definition closer to Mitchell and Stake’s broad sensibility. As Yin notes, this broader, potentially unbounded type of definition of the case is not without consequence (1984: 31). Closely linked to this is the

complementary issue of defining a clearly bounded organization within in which participation takes place, covered in the next chapter.

Defining the case as participation in grassroots political campaigns both narrows and broadens the case study in important ways. It cuts out participation in other manners (such as donating money or writing a blog), in other parts of political campaigns (such as media or research) and other actors (such as media consultants or staff, reporters or consultancy agencies). Nor is the case study of the Democratic Party per se – the focus of the study, and therefore the case, is the people who do participation on grassroots campaigns. To the extent that some of this place and context is in official Democratic Party organizations, then it is about the Party. But there many parts of the Party or campaign organizations which are not about or accessible to grassroots participants – finance meetings, executive staff, etc – and therefore are not the focus of the study. These organizational dimensions of the party and campaigns are addressed in further detail in chapter three.

In another sense, however, this definition of the case as grassroots campaign participation and the immediate context in which it takes place broadens the case beyond clearly identifiable organizational boundaries. It is unbounded in the sense that there are no card carrying members to distinguish who is officially participating from those who are not, nor can participation be restricted to any one organization. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that the case is situated entirely within Massachusetts, and that for purposes of generalization some of the specific dimensions of participation in Massachusetts merit explication. In this next section, I cover some of the key components of Massachusetts, including its economic and political dimensions, which are relevant to the question of what kind of case is chosen and its relevance for generalizability.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts today has many similarities with other postindustrial states and countries. By some indicators it boasts a strong economy with a high median household income, high rates of education and low unemployment. The three largest

job sectors are health and education, covering Massachusetts' many hospitals and universities, trade, transport and utilities, and business and professional sector. It also has a strong biotech sector and growing creative economy. However, this masks a more mixed economic picture. Job creation between 2001 and 2006 lagged behind national levels, and real wages dropped during the same period. Moreover, population growth is slow, and only gains made through immigration have offset the increasing loss of young adults who move out of state. Finally, the economic gap between the richest and poorest residents has widened during the same period.⁹

Geographically, the majority of Massachusetts' 6.4 million residents live in the eastern half of the state, dominated by the metro-Boston area. With a number of universities and hospitals, Boston boasts one of the densest city centers in the United States. Boston also has a healthy financial services and banking sector (or had, until very recently), if much smaller than in previous decades. Metro-Boston is also more ethnically diverse than the rest of the state, although some 2nd and 3rd tier cities such as Springfield and Lawrence have similar diversity. Overall, fully 90% of housing units in Massachusetts are in urban areas.

In partisan terms, Massachusetts is somewhat more mixed than the uniform blue on recent Electoral College maps. In fact, there are almost two political portraits of the state, although both favor Democrats. Voters consistently send Democratic Senators and Representatives to Congress, and the last time a Republican was among the state's congressional delegation was 1975, when Paul Tsongas finally won the 5th district. On the state level, Democrats similarly dominate the State House and Senate chambers: in 2004, 137 of 160 members of the State House were Democrats, and 34 of 40 State Senators. In 2006, that number increased to 141 house members and 35 State Senators. Yet the Governor's office had been held by Republicans for 16 consecutive years up until the 2006 elections.

In terms of the partisan identification of voters, the last major realignment of voters' partisan identification occurred as a result of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency, which broke the Republican Party's hold on the state. Voters registered with the Democratic Party constituted 37.2% of the electorate in 2006 (Boston Globe

⁹ For more detailed information, see Appendix 1.

2006), far stronger than the 13% registered with the Republican Party. However, the number of voters who do not register with any political party ('unenrolled' voters) is and has been higher than the national average since FDR's time. Unenrolled voters made up 49% of the electorate in 2006, and have consistently been between 35-40% since the 1940s (Denison 2006). This is remarkably higher than the national average of 24% of voters registered without a party affiliation.

One Boston-based think tank put together a political geography that helps to account for some of this diversity. By dividing the state into ten political regions, *CommonWealth Magazine* highlighted the diverse economic, demographic, political, and ideological dimensions of the state produce a more complicated and hard-to-predict landscape for statewide elections.¹⁰ These ranging from 'lefty liberal' areas which are "to Massachusetts what Massachusetts is to the United States – more liberal, more Democratic, better educated, less populated by nuclear families, and more often on the losing side of close elections" to staunch Republican 'Cranberry country' on Cape Cod with the highest proportion of registered Republican voters; from the libertarian north shore area to moderate and conservative Democratic middle sections of the state (Sullivan 2006). Thus the deep blue hue of Massachusetts' elected representatives at the state and federal level is not matched by an equally deep blue electorate.

The 2006 Electoral Campaigns

Grassroots political activity in Massachusetts in the 2004 presidential elections and 2005 local elections was more extensive than in previous recent years. In addition to the many volunteers who participated in the 2004 Democratic presidential campaign, voter turnout and campaign activity was widely perceived to be markedly higher during the 2005 local elections. Several incumbent mayors and city councilors lost in the nonpartisan primaries to newer political candidates who all used a strong grassroots field work campaigns as part of their strategy. Leading up to 2006, then, there were good indications that grassroots activity would be extensive.

¹⁰ See Appendix 2.

While the exciting elections in Massachusetts in 2006 were at the state and local level, national politics provided a back note of activity. Both the Republican Governor Mitt Romney and John Kerry in the early stages of 2006 considered running for President in 2008.¹¹ Neither of these pre-campaigns generated much in-state activity, but Senator Ted Kennedy used his re-election campaign as a way of jumpstarting grassroots campaign work. While Kennedy's seat was never in any doubt, he combined his re-election campaign with the statewide coordinated campaign, providing concrete activities for grassroots participants to complete (such as gathering signatures for the ballot) and a charismatic figurehead for the early stages of 2006.

In the end, it was the gubernatorial race that was the real star of the campaign season. Because Governor Romney was not running for re-election the race was for an open seat, whoever won the Democratic nomination would face Republican Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey in the general election. It was by no means the assumption that whoever won the primary would win the election. On the contrary, electability was a topic of debate throughout the primary campaign season.

The Democratic gubernatorial primary started out as a contest between Attorney General Tom Reilly and Deval Patrick, a relatively new figure to the Massachusetts political scene. Reilly was widely considered a party insider and had a formidable lead in the polls and in money in the early months of 2006. While Patrick had served at the higher levels of the federal government under Clinton as the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division¹² and was a prominent corporate lawyer, he had never held elected office and had a relatively low profile within the state. Both campaigned essentially from the 2005 state party convention in June, and were joined by latecomer Chris Gabrieli in the winter of 2006. Gabrieli was the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor in 2002 and a very wealthy entrepreneur who largely self-funded his campaign to the tune of over \$7.5 million, a state record (Mooney 2006).

¹¹ Kerry did not run again, but Romney did join the presidential primaries.

¹² Patrick was nominated and confirmed with little fanfare after Lani Guinier's very public failed nomination.

The Democratic primary election for Lieutenant Governor also shaped up to be a competitive race. Tim Murphy, Mayor of Worcester, Deb Goldberg, a supermarket millionaire heiress and Brookline town selectwoman¹³, and Andrea Silbert, a businesswoman and entrepreneur, all ran for Lieutenant Governor. Incumbent Massachusetts Secretary of State William Galvin faced progressive challenger Jon Bonifaz, and while the race did generate attention, especially among progressive participants, the margins were never as close for the Secretary of State race as for either Governor or Lieutenant Governor. Finally, the other statewide race was for Attorney General. Incumbent AG Tom Reilly did not run for this as he was running for Governor, so widely popular Middlesex County District Attorney Martha Coakley ran as the uncontested nominee. In addition, State Senators and Representatives, District Attorneys, Registries of Deeds, and a host of local offices were all on the ballot, many of which ran grassroots political campaigns as well.

The US Democratic Party and national politics: the state of affairs

While the case study is decidedly about state level politics, a brief overview of the state of affairs nationally and how it looked for Democrats is useful in order to address issues of the suitability and generalizability of Massachusetts as a case. Additionally, taking note of several national-level political dynamics at this point can assist understanding what participants were doing and the national context in which this participation was taking place. Most important for the thesis is that in from 2004-2006 the Democratic Party was nationally out of power, holding neither Congress nor the Presidency; the broader debate about the direction of the party should take in order to regain power; the steps that national level political elites were taking to make that return to governing a reality; and especially the technological changes related to campaigning tactics.

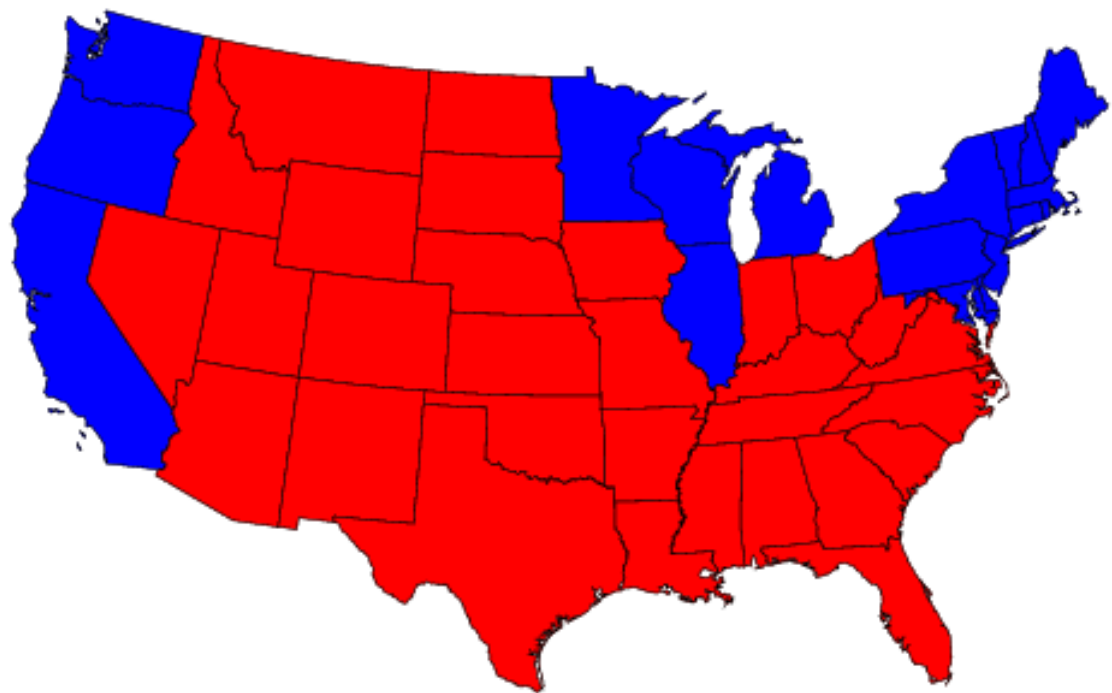
After Kerry lost the 2004 elections, Democrats woke up to face a largely red map of America (Figure 2.1) and, in the words of Bush campaign mastermind Karl Rove, the prospect of a slow but steady rolling Republican realignment. Not only did President

¹³ A committee of three selectmen or women often substituted for a single mayor as the chief executive in city and town governments.

Bush win re-election, but the Republican Party made gains in both the House and Senate. While the picture was somewhat less bleak at the state level – Democrats picked more seats in state legislatures than Republicans did, and won a number of governor’s seats – the overall impression was one of being soundly beaten.

Not unsurprisingly, and as is often the case after sound defeats, Democratic Party members from elite elected officials down to the least involved voters entered a period of intense navel gazing, trying to understand what went wrong and what needed to be done to regain power. In advance of the election for Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chair in December 2004, the New York Times ran op-eds from leading Democratic strategists, thinkers, former and current officials outlining what the Party should do to stop a rolling realignment from gradually pushing Democrats further back into their coastal and great lakes enclaves.

Figure 2.1: 2004 Electoral College Vote¹⁴



¹⁴ <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mejn/election>.

Broadly speaking, opinion on this matter generally fell into two camps. On the one hand were those who felt that the primary problem was the recent Party messenger. There was nothing fundamentally wrong with the Democratic Party or what it offered. After all, Kerry had won more votes than any other nominee in the history of US elections – Bush just happened to get more (Bai 2005). Clearly something was working to get so close in the Electoral College and popular vote count. But, in a somewhat contradictory point, the real problem was that electorally the party was limited by an effete, elite, liberal and French-like candidate who failed to connect with the average voter. Voters wanted someone they could sit down and have a beer with, and clearly Kerry was not that kind of guy. What the Democrats needed was not some fundamental shift but a clarification of the message, better delivery, and a better candidate. Someone, maybe, more like Bill Clinton.

The second camp found something fundamentally wrong with the Party, especially in the ranks of the Washington insiders who had lost touch with what Democrats were really about, what voters really wanted, and had essentially moved the Party away from its fundamental values and run it into the ground. This group, broadly speaking, perceived the vote of many prominent Democrats in favor of the authorization of the use of force in Iraq as a complete pushover and betrayal of Democratic supporters like themselves. This view was articulated most strongly by those who rallied around Democratic presidential primary candidate Howard Dean and his call for the unilateral withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. They could be found running the new ‘blogs’ and organizing online – they were the netroots, they were mad, and, to paraphrase the words of one leading netroots progressive, it was time for the barbarians to storm the gates of the Washington elites (Armstrong 2006).

While this opposition was largely against Democrats’ role as handmaidens to the Iraq War, the opposition went well beyond any one policy area. A larger perceived problem was the triangulation that Clinton practiced relentlessly and effectively as President. As Matt Bai describes, some of the outspoken netroots activists did not want any part of reaching a hand across the aisle when the other side of the aisle played so ugly (2006: 141). Equally, part of the problem was the reliance on what was perceived to be a small core of professional consultants who had no interest in

the actual policies and integrity of the Democratic Party, but who simply worked for their paycheck, advocated spending more money on advertising so they could receive a cut and paid little heed to what might be appropriate for a given race (Armstrong 2006). In this view, if Democrats were going to find their way back into power, they were going to have to get a spine and start changing the way they practiced campaigning.

The netroots activists, having had their favored candidate lose in the primary, and then watching as their grudgingly accepted Democratic candidate lost all too closely in the general election did get one consolation prize in the election of Howard Dean as DNC chair. Dean won that office, in part, on the promise of funneling more money into state party organizations in order to invest in long-term party growth, including infrastructure and rebuilding the Democratic 'brand' at the grassroots level. Yet as Galvin points out, the anti-establishment backed Chairman Dean in many ways benefitted from the rebuilding work that started with none other than Bill Clinton and was carried on by his allies (Galvin 2008). These previous establishment-type chairs paid off the national and state party organization's longstanding debts, raising huge sums of money in order to do so. They invested in new infrastructure, including a nationally-based voter database, and convinced begrudging state party leaders to hand over their lists of supporters. By the time Dean announced the DNC's '50 state strategy' for the 2006 mid-term elections, in which they would give money to each and every state party in order to invest in coordinated campaign full-time field organizers, staff, and further infrastructure, he was largely able to do so because of the groundwork that had been painstakingly laid and implemented since 1996.

In large part, all of these developments from 2004 to 2006 were related to the rapid development of the internet and the attendant new technologies and related campaigning practices. While opponents of the Iraq War staged traditional protests and did what other movements do, war they also found an increasing ability to mobilize online, taking previously non-partisan organizations like MoveOn.org and transforming them by rallying around war issues. Both the John McCain campaign in 2000 and the Howard Dean campaign in 2004 experimented with online organizing,

from small Meetup.com groups to building a network of small dollar donations into a record breaking fundraising machine. Voter databases also became increasingly sophisticated over this period of time, so that the Bush campaign in 2004 was able to micro-target their messages so that consumption habits could be used to identify very small slices of the electorate. This was by no means new, but according to participants at the time the extent to which they were able to target was increasingly sophisticated.¹⁵ Finally, the voter databases used in field work for identifying and mobilizing voters was increasingly mobile and accessible. In 2004 Americans Coming Together, the 527 organization largely responsible for getting out the vote for Democrats in Ohio were knocking on doors using palm pilots that listed a resident's name, address and could give the canvasser the option of playing specific advertising messages based on what voters reported was important to them. Canvassers could then enter in the voter's intentions (for Kerry or Bush), and the data would be uploaded back onto a central database server at campaign headquarters (Bai 2005). While this specific model of playing videos on palm pilots was abandoned after 2004, it is but one example of how get out the vote campaigns were using increasingly sophisticated technology and database software to run and organize their efforts. In more recent years, this kind of software technology has become increasingly easy to use, sophisticated, and targeted.

While none of these dynamics are directly addressed in this thesis, they do situate some of the immediate issues which are examined. The database technology, for instance, backgrounds how participants learn about and know about how to do field work, and the debate running through the Party nationally, and especially the progressive movement, features as part of participants' conceptions of party loyalty and anti-party sentiment. It is also useful for understanding why Massachusetts is both an exceptional and useful case.

¹⁵ Harvard Institute of Politics Seminar with Democratic and Republican strategists, November 2004.

Evaluating case studies

Case selection

At the time of case selection, one of the main reasons why Massachusetts seemed like a good place to look at grassroots campaign participation because ‘something’ was going on, even if that something was not entirely clear. In hindsight, the argument for the case being an extreme or unique one (Bryman 2008: 55) seems much more clear. First, the number of competitive gubernatorial and lieutenant gubernatorial campaigns in the primaries, plus Kennedy’s re-election campaign/the statewide coordinated campaign, plus down ticket campaigns offered a host of opportunities for grassroots participation. While there is no way to compare with other years from primary observation or secondary sources, accounts from participants who had been involved for more than one state-wide election cycle reported that the level of grassroots organizing was much more extensive in 2006 than it had been in 2002, and much more than the almost non-existent grassroots campaigning in the 1998 gubernatorial elections. Therefore, the extent to which grassroots participants were participating more and across different campaign organizations may very well be more extreme for this case than it would be for others. In this sense, this case provides a unique opportunity to understand the dimensions of grassroots participation that happen not just in one organization but the parts that exist in between and beyond any one organizational structure.

Also important is the relationship between the Massachusetts primary campaigns and the 2008 Democratic Presidential primary and general election campaigns. As was widely reported in the national news media, Deval Patrick (who went on to win both the primary and general election) shared a chief strategist with Barack Obama in David Axelrod. The similarities between the two candidates and the campaigns they ran are numerous: each candidate is of African-American descent and dealt with the issue of race in similar ways; each man framed their message of hope and change in broad language,¹⁶ and each used the resources brought by early and enthusiastic supporters to challenge a better funded and better known candidate to get a toehold in

¹⁶ Indeed, during the primaries in 2008 Obama even used some of the same slogans and speech texts as Deval Patrick in 2006, much to the delight of his opponents.

the primaries. Strategically, both Deval Patrick and Barack Obama used caucus systems to their advantage, in which a small band of organized supporters can have a greater impact compared to primaries.¹⁷ Axelrod was quite candid about the fact that Deval Patrick's campaign was a dry run for the Obama campaign in 2008 (Kaminski 2008). Although there was no way to know it at the time, the 2006 gubernatorial primaries was unusual in that it literally provided a preview of the campaign strategy, including grassroots campaigning and participation, that would be used by the winning candidate of the Democratic presidential primary in 2008. Although the campaign strategy of neither the Patrick campaign nor any other is really the focus of the case study, it does point towards the relevancy of the case for issues of generalizability.

This logic of generalizability is distinct from the kind of generalizability used in quantitative and survey research that is based on representativeness. In the classic positivist tradition, a case or cases are selected based on shared characteristics with a larger target population. In survey work, this is done through the use of identifying a sampling frame and through a randomized selection process or, alternatively, through quota sampling, and the characteristics found in a sample can be reasonably extended to the larger target population. The logic of an extreme or unusual case, however, is based on the notion that it may have an intrinsic value, as is the case here with the Patrick campaign, the Obama campaign, and the relevance of grassroots campaigning to pertinent national political questions.

The second relevant logic of generalizability that is applicable here reframes the question of generalizing to a larger target population in order to come to conclusions about that population to a question of generalizing for the purpose of theory generation. When the research objective is theory generation, the case and site selection strategy and thus claims to generalizability are different (Blaikie 2000: 256). The claim to generalizability is not based on the characteristics of the cases or sites as holding the same characteristics of a parent population, but of the creation of

¹⁷ Barack Obama won the Iowa caucus in 2008, which took away Hillary Clinton's argument of being the inevitable and invincible candidate. Similarly, Deval Patrick's supporters won many more delegate spots to the 2006 state Democratic Convention (which are decided through a caucus system) than did Reilly or Gabrieli, giving Patrick an early victory which challenged Reilly's claim to inevitability.

a theory of general utility, which can then be tested, tried, and grounded in further study.¹⁸ Since the research aims explicitly include theory generation – regarding the relevancy of political campaigning for civic engagement, for the conception of similarities and differences between different kinds of participation, and the concept validity of incentives categories, among others – this logic of generalizability and the case selection is well suited to the research questions and aims. This latter focus on theory development is crucial to assessing the strength of research. Mitchell (1983) argues that the ability of a case study to generate theory is in fact the chief assessment criterion.

Further criteria: Trustworthiness and authenticity

Beyond the specifics of the case study approach, if interpretive work does not play by the same rules as the positivist traditions, on what grounds should such research be judged? One area of debate is the extent to which concepts like validity and reliability, built up in the positivist social sciences, are appropriate for assessing research conducted with an interpretative approach. While some have adapted positivist terminology to suit interpretative and/or constructivist research (e.g. Kirk and Miller 1986), others have adopted separate terminology in order to make these differences in criteria clear. Bryman (2008) summarizes and contrasts the positivist terminology of generalizability, internal validity, objectivity, reliability and replication with the constructivist terminology of relatability, credibility, confirmability, dependability, and replicability. These latter concepts all build into what Guba and Lincoln describe as ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ (Guba and Lincoln 1994, cited in Bryman 2008: 377). The difference in the terms and concepts used is meant to convey the ontological and epistemological differences between positivist and constructivists approaches. By emphasizing confirmability over objectivity, and dependability over reliability, Guba and Lincoln make apparent the lack of claims about an objective social reality which can be accessed and revealed by social scientists.

¹⁸ This point has also been made about case study research more specifically. See Yin (1984).

In assessing this research, I focus specifically on credibility, transparency, and ethical considerations in addition to generalizability, addressed above. Credibility refers to the extent to which a researcher is able to account for and present a myriad of perspectives and points of view of social actors. It can be established by “ensuring that the research is carried out according to the canons of good practice” and through respondent validation (Bryman 2008: 377). Similar to Bryman’s good practice, Glaser and Strauss set the criteria for judging scientific rigor in “the detailed elements of the actual strategies used for collecting, coding, analyzing, and presenting data when generating theory” (1967: 224). In the research methods section I will describe both the methods used and link them to accounts of established ‘good practice’ in order to make a case for the credibility of the research.

Second, throughout the research period in the field, I shared results and ideas with respondents in a spirit similar to respondent validation described by Bryman. In addition to using pilot interviews as a way of identifying key concepts and issues, described below, I also solicited input from informants. These questions included queries along the lines of whether an issue was important and worth asking about, what their take was on the course of events, and sharing ideas about what the research was about with key informants and gate keepers. In addition, I have shared ideas in the writing up process with three informants on an informal, conversational level over email or in person.¹⁹ While more limited and informal than the methods of respondent validation described by Bryman (2008: 377-8), this does have several advantages. Unlike the more formal methods of sharing a completed paper or research report, these conversations transmit the basic concepts in an understandable way to informants. Such an informal process of translation thus avoids the possible “can’t understand a bloody word it says” reaction that Skeggs reports (1994: 86) which is both unhelpful and, possibly, alienating.

In terms of assessing research, there are two additional issues which crop up in a number of descriptions and across research done in different traditions. The first is transparency as the root of replicability, dependability and confirmability, (or in the natural science tradition, replication, validity and reliability). Transparency can be

¹⁹ A more extensive dissemination of research results is planned with all informants in the form of an executive summary report.

achieved through a careful documentation of the research process, including everything from question and problem formulation, through data collection and analysis, and through the sharing of research results. This helps other researchers to judge whether good practice was followed, whether concepts are about what they say they are, and whether a study could in theory be done again (even if the contours of social research make replicability a near impossibility in practice).

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have important professional, moral, and legal dimensions. A researcher has responsibility not just to her professional community, but to the research participants and, although it is only rarely that they must be addressed, legal duties regarding the regulation of scientific research. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that ethical considerations be fully addressed.

My attention to these responsibilities fall into four linked areas: establishing my identity as a researcher, dissemination of information about the research process, informed consent, and ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants. Establishing my identity as a researcher was the first important consideration, especially since I worked in electoral politics in the not so distant past, and already had acquaintances and colleagues in the network of Democratic politics. In order to make it clear where ‘work’ ended and ‘research’ began, I followed two rules: none of my experiences while in the employ of any political campaign or group was participant observation, and second, with the exception of the friends who gracefully served as informants in the pilot interviews, I did not interview any informant with whom I had previously worked on any campaign. I should also note that the participant observation did not happen in the same physical spaces as my previous working experiences.

Disseminating information about my research and informed consent will be discussed below, but the issue of confidentiality requires further elaboration here. In the informed consent, I guaranteed informants confidentiality. This was a key feature for building trust and rapport during the interviews. Sometimes while answering a

question telling a story, informants would comment that, ‘well, since this is confidential’ and proceed to share a potentially sensitive piece of information, or a view that was different from one they had taken publicly. Generally these facts are of little interest other than to those directly involved, but for either the informants themselves or those discussed it was of obvious importance. Given the density of the Democratic politics network, in some cases informants could potentially be identified by these tales, and thus no stories or specific accounts which could easily jeopardize confidentiality are included in the presentation of the data.

Further, I have made the specific campaigns, organizations, and locations of informants similarly anonymous. While categorical information is included in the analysis (e.g., town or ward committee involvement, gubernatorial campaign involvement, state rep race, etc), I do not specify which town committee or campaign the participation refers to. Indeed, given that some participants were relatively elite within one or more organization, identifying the organizations at this level of specificity would similarly jeopardize confidentiality. These choices provide safeguards while not compromising the integrity of the analysis.

Does this organizational anonymity jeopardize the generalizability of the research findings? After all, there are differences between campaigns, and part of the case for generalizability relies on the relationship between having looked at the Deval Patrick campaign in 2006, which shared a number of similarities with the Barack Obama campaign in 2008. However, the key feature of each of these is not the specific way in which they did the campaigning, but the mere fact that both used field work so prominently at all. As I will discuss in chapter three, there is a strong case for arguing that some norms and aspects of this particular grassroots political network stretch beyond the activities of any one organization.

Ethical issues and a reflexive approach to the researcher’s own standpoint are also important assessment criteria for evaluating the case study itself. Are a researcher’s own concerns and/or biases incorporated into the research design? Is this done to the detriment of good practice? And how are these ethical dimensions approached? Of particular concern, as noted by Bloor (1997), is the ability of the researcher to be critical about the research subject. Could my previous ties to Democratic campaigns

compromise my own ability to be a critical researcher, and report on negative dimensions of my subjects?

There are several possible points in which a researcher's own biases, judgments or feelings about the research subject could matter. The first is the argument that the very selection of a research subject entails the judgment that it is worthy of study in the first place (Crenson 1971). In this respect the research reflects my own biases, because I do think that participation in campaigns is worthy of study. However, this is not so different from the choices that many other researchers make, and therefore is not outside the realm of 'good' research practices. The second and possibly more troubling question is regarding the ability to be critical about the research findings. In other words, as a researcher who had previously been involved with Democratic campaigns, did I shield my research subjects by only presenting data which puts them in a positive light?

The first point is to detail the extent of my own biases and their relationship with the research subjects and design. First, while I have worked on both a national Democratic general election campaign (for President) and on non-partisan local races, I had not previously worked on any state level political races nor on any primary races. This has two important effects. First, it was relatively easy to make sure (as I describe below) not to interview anyone with whom I worked on a campaign. This avoided having to make any potentially compromising decisions in order to 'shield' close personal contacts. In the majority of cases, data was collected among participants with whom I had only met whilst conducting the PhD research. Further, the commitment to an interpretative approach foregrounds understanding multiple points of view. In some cases this meant finding areas where participants saw things differently and where there may be conflicts between different actors. Where these conflicts and/or different ways of seeing situations are apparent, I address them in the thesis.

The second possible place where bias could come in would be by siding with one campaign or candidate over another. However, the decision to keep the organizations in which participation takes place anonymous for the reader does the protection work for participants as well as campaigns. Given the relatively small size of the grassroots

political world and the extent to which different participants know each other, this confidentiality was crucial to establishing trust among informants and ensuring the anonymity of individual participants. In terms of the integrity of the research, it also helped to ensure that bias was an issue in one less case.

Third and finally, there could be the issue of trying to shield the Democratic Party itself from any adverse or negative findings. In this final respect I was greatly aided by respondents themselves who felt free in pointing out whatever shortcomings they felt were present. This meant that my job as a researcher was, once establishing a space in which they could speak comfortably and honestly, making sure that those answers collected were analyzed in a transparent and consistent manner. So in terms of ethical issues and concerns about bias, the approach for dealing with them is really the same as for assessing and dealing with other potential problems: well established practices shared by a community of researchers and transparency in the research process.

In sum, using a case study of grassroots campaign participants and the context in which they participate in the 2006 Massachusetts Democratic primary campaigns is well suited to the research questions, aims, and strategy. While the specific way in which grassroots participation is defined as the focus of study is not without potential problems in terms of the case definition, I believe the benefits of using a less-well bounded case relate in important ways to the research questions and aims. Further, while recognizing how the case is an unusual one makes it more relevant to questions of current events that have intrinsic value, this does not take away from the usefulness of the case for generating theoretical and conceptual developments. Finally, the credibility, transparency, and ethical issues are outlined as additional important criteria by which to judge the quality of research. In the next section, I elaborate on the research methods used.

Research Methods

Selecting a case study in no way guarantees how data will be collected in that case, nor how the data will be analyzed. In this section I address adopting a multi-method

approach to data collection and analysis, the stages and methods of data collection, and analytical tools used.

I collected data using a number of tools, including interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, and documentary analysis. The main advantage of using a multi-method approach is that it provides the researcher with greater opportunity to corroborate reports or interpretations gained through one form of data collection, like interviews, with accounts offered via other forms, such as documents or observation. While a multi-method approach may present difficulties for the researcher, namely using tools with very different ontological presuppositions, they can also successfully be combined within one strategy (Blaikie 2000: 266). Multiple accounts can corroborate a consensus around a specific meaning, or throw into relief the existence of differing and even conflicting interpretations of events, language, and accounts of meaning (Blaikie 2000: 266). Multi-methods can be useful for elaboration and initiation (Wilson 1985, cited in Blaikie 2000: 267). Elaboration occurs when an initial understanding reached via one method is expanded using another (Blaikie 2000: 267), for instance when an observation from canvassing was followed up on in an interview, or a description or interpretation from an interview corroborated through observation. Initiation occurs when non-convergent data are used to spark off new interpretations and suggest future areas of research (Blaikie 2000: 267).

Stages of data collection

Data was collected in two main stages, after an initial period in the field articulating and refining my research questions and the scope of inquiry. During this initial period, I formulated research questions and became familiar with the Democratic politics in Massachusetts through a combination of immersing myself in group discussions and events, reading news accounts, and generally hanging around. No official data collection or participant observation was undertaken during this period (roughly January – April 2005), but I did keep informal notes, continued reading scholarly work on the topic, and sketched out areas of inquiry to pursue in my

research.²⁰ I tested and refined my interview schedule during a period of pilot interviewing, at which point I also began collecting primary documents and observing political events. This was followed by the main period of data collection, from April to September of 2006. I collected primary documents such as public records and news accounts throughout the research period.

Table 2.1: Research timetable

Research question formation	January – April 2005
Stage 1: Pilot interviews	January – April 2006
Stage 2: Interviews, questionnaires participant observation	April – September 2006

Stage 1

The pilot interview stage was critical to achieving good scientific practice in the data collection. Pilot interviews, along with some limited participant observation, provided the opportunity to ‘test’ and improve my interview questions. It also provided the opportunity to improve my skills as a researcher.

I made a number of changes to the interview schedule during the pilot stage, substantially cutting down the number and scope of questions, and shifting to a more semi-structured format. While it was always my intention to use a semi-structured interview with more open ended questions, during pilot stage I refined the questions into subject areas which could be pursued in a more semi-structured manner. Initially, I started off interviews with a written questionnaire as a way of picking up routine and standard data points such as age, hometown, and the groups individuals participated in. However, during the pilot interviews it became clear that informants were conscious of the answers they had just given as to their previous and current involvements, and in some cases made reference to or excused how little experience

²⁰ The ethical considerations of this stage of research were discussed with my supervisor, and guidelines for these practices set.

they had. As such these routine questions were moved to the end of the interview. This aided establishing rapport at the beginning and gave the experience more of a conversational feel. The other substantial change I made was to specify the scope of time which the questions referred to and/or when they referred to participation in specific organizations or campaigns, as opposed to their experience in general. I discuss the importance of these changes more in the section on Stage 2 interviews.

The pilot stages also proved incredibly helpful in providing the time and space for improving and reflecting upon my own interview techniques. I listened to the taped interviews and made notes on specific practices, such as interrupting or making sure questions were asked in a neutral and balanced manner that needed improvement. This latter technique was extremely important when discussing potentially sensitive topics such as diversity within the Democratic Party and negative items such as their dislikes about the campaign work. In the early stages of interviewing, some friends and former colleagues who were involved in politics agreed to be interviewed. While it was clear that such personal connections would not be appropriate in the non-pilot interviews, speaking to someone I trusted helped to build my confidence as an interviewer. These interviews were followed by a 'debrief' session, in which the informant evaluated my performance, indicating where they felt lost by the sequencing of questions and thought things jumped around, topics they thought were interesting but we did not spend much time discussing, and my own comportment, including body language, note taking, conversation style, and attention span.

Overall, the pilot interview stage provided a critical opportunity to focus the scope of my interview schedule, improve my interviewing techniques, and start off the interview data collection period feeling confident in my own abilities. Several of the pilot interviewees continued to be helpful throughout the research process, including referring me to other potential informants. Some were also critical for providing their own interpretations or analysis of events I did not entirely grasp the meaning of on my own, indicating fruitful lines of inquiry for follow up questions within interviews and aiding my understanding of the broader political dynamics of key races and in some committees.

Stage 2

During the primary stage of data collection, I collected and analyzed documents, conducted participant observation, and recruited and undertook interviews. The interviews constitute the bulk of my data and provided the richest accounts. I review the primary documents and participant observation here before moving onto the interview solicitation, sampling, and related issues in the final section.

Primary documents constitute an important source of data in qualitative research. I collected newspaper and media accounts, political and economic analysis from local nonprofits and think tanks, website content, political flyers, and materials from participant observation. I use these documents in two main ways, in providing context and corroboration. Some documents were helpful in, for instance, providing an account of the economic and political context of the research locale, included at the beginning of this chapter, and providing an ongoing paper trail of events through news and media (including websites) throughout the primary election period. Others were useful in corroborating interpretations provided by informants, particularly in conjunction with the analysis of campaign skills, in chapters four and seven. This latter use of primary documents was done through a content analysis, subjecting the language of written accounts to the same analysis as interview transcriptions.

Participant observation was the most limited of the three data collection techniques in terms of the quantity of data collected; in quality they are a crucial component of the multi-method approach and provided a rich source of data. Participant observation included taking part in small group discussions about politics, attending meetings and rallies, and taking part in door-to-door canvassing. In dealing with the ethical implications of participant observation, I adopted two strategies. First, I disseminated information about my research as widely as possible. This included talking about my research to individuals with whom I was in direct contact (for instance, during canvassing and in small group meetings). I also sought out important gate keepers, and discussed my research with them so that they were aware of what I was doing, even when they were not actually present at events or in charge of events. Second, where possible, I obtained permission for participant observation. It was not always possible to identify the gate keepers for a specific event, like a rally or large public

meeting, but when gate keepers were identifiable I obtained verbal consent. Given the openness of the system and the ethos of encouraging participation, this was never a problem. Like the documentary analysis, participant observation was useful for providing context and corroboration. It was also key for elaboration, for instance supplementing discussions of campaigning organization, techniques and skills.

Interviews were the prime source of data collection and of gathering participants' accounts of their experiences, in their own words. A copy of the schedule is included in Appendix 3. After initial contact to solicit an interview, often by way of a third party introduction, the interview process started off with 'small talk'. Often this included discussion of how I knew the person who introduced us, which provided the opportunity to make connections and begin to establish trust and rapport. By coming through a trusted source, I found that many informants were quick to accept my role as a researcher and assume I had some bare knowledge of the political world. In some cases I was already a familiar face from participant observation. After small talk, I would review an informed consent form, explain the research aims, what the content of the interviews would include, and how the interviews were used. Informants were given a copy of this cover page, which included my contact information, to keep. The consent form established that interviews were confidential, that is, they would not be identifiable in any of the published materials, and all primary data would be kept securely²¹. This period also provided the opportunity for informants to ask any further questions, in some cases they did, but in most cases did not. I also asked to record the interviews, using either an audio cassette or digital voice recorder (DVR). Some participants declined to be taped, and on two occasions the DVR broke before or during the interview. On these occasions I took detailed notes during the interview, and immediately returned to type out a narrative of the interview after it finished. In addition, I took notes on the interview schedule during all interviews. Interview transcriptions were produced after returning from the field, partially transcribed by myself and partially by a professional transcription service.²²

²¹ Interview audio files, transcripts, questionnaires, and notes are stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Edinburgh.

²² Transcription audio files were labeled using an alphanumeric system which anonymized the participant's name. The transcription service was located outside the research locale, and the transcription contract included a statement of confidentiality. Approximately one fifth of the forty five hours of interview tape was transcribed professionally.

I also jotted down notes and thoughts on the interview after it was completed. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and 3 hours, with the majority averaging between 40 and 50 minutes.

At the end of the interview process I included a questionnaire, which included a series of open-ended questions about what other groups or organizations participants were involved in. The purpose with these was to establish a broader context of the participant's experiences outside the focus on the immediate 2006 primary campaign participation. While the questions were open-ended, this section did not go into the level of detail as the rest of the interview. Informants identified the other groups they were involved in,²³ and additional civic and political activities they had done in the past year. Thus the interview in almost all cases produced four documents: an interview schedule with notes taken during the interview, a questionnaire, an interview recording and transcription, and notes of my impressions and thoughts from the interview after it was completed.

I constructed my interview sample through a combination of snowballing and solicitation at various campaign and committee events. I attempted to ensure a parity of gender and ages. I also endeavored to get a fairly even distribution between participants who were involved as a staff organizer and those who were involved as a volunteer. Although many more of my informants lived in the greater Boston area, a significant portion of informants were from outside this area. Table 2.1 summarizes these distributions.

There were some sampling issues which were brought up during the pilot stages of the interview. First, my assumption that participation could largely be defined as being within one campaign or organizational setting did not coincide with how people were describing their current participation in the interviews. Some early participants reported doing an activity which could be described as participating in several groups at once. For instance, one participant described running on a slate as a delegate to the state Democratic Party convention in June 2006.

²³ I used the same operationalization of 'participate' as in the rest of the case study, as having attended a meeting. A separate question covered political, non-profit, and charity donations

Table 2.2: Interviews

Men	53% (24)
Women	47% (21)
Under 35	47% (21)
Over 35	53% (24)
Residence in metro Boston area	67% (30)
Residence outside metro Boston	33% (15)
Present campaign organizer	31% (14)
Previous campaign organizer	31% (14)
Volunteer	38% (17)
Total Interviews (excluding pilots)	100% (45)

They coordinated with the candidate's campaign organization to be listed as part of the slate, went to their local town Democratic committee meeting to be elected, and then represented the town/candidate at the convention. With the exception of the first coordination with the candidate's campaign, each of these activities could alternatively be described as participating in the candidate's campaign or participating in the state party organization. Other informants more explicitly described their canvassing as being for multiple candidates or covering more than one role.²⁴

Indeed, some informant had trouble articulating which was their 'primary' commitment during the primaries, or unsure of their own role, or how it fit into a larger organizational context. In some cases, I was referred to an informant as being involved in one organization, only to find out that they were mostly concerned with their participation in another. In a couple of instances I was referred to interviews with informants who had no clear organizational role or title, and yet appeared to be somehow running or shaping an entire field division and strategy. So the lack of clear organizational boundaries and participants own ambiguity about their roles was in marked contrast to my initial assumptions.

²⁴ While this practice was, as far as I know, not encouraged by campaign organizers and staff other than the coordinated campaign, it was not uncommon for respondents to report combining asking about a voter's preference for candidates in gubernatorial, lieutenant governor, and additional statewide or legislative races.

At the same time, snowballing interviews was proving to be an effective method of gaining more interviews at both the staff and volunteer level, but it clearly did not fit with the idea of a sample restricted to just a few campaigns, or even the greater Boston geographical area. Often the recommendation would be to an individual in another town or area of the state, as organizational ties (i.e., participation in the same organization) and personal networks spread across the entire state.²⁵ Given that some races were state-wide, and in some cases colleagues or friends were involved in the same organization but lived in different locations, this made sense. These experiences and observations led me to frame my understanding of the case as being clearly bounded at the state-level rather than the regional or local level. While I still had the choice to pursue a research design which limited the data collection to one organization or one geographical area, in my estimation this would clearly exclude understanding of the context in which people participated, and thus was out of step with my research aims and methods. Indeed, the grounded theory process of conversation between theory, including concept definition, and data, is as I describe it here.

Of course, saying that the Democratic Party was not as clearly organized in practice as it looked on paper is not an entirely new proposition. In creating his party definition, discussed in the previous chapter, V.O. Key (1964) noted the difference between a clear party organization on paper, and a comprehensible and clear organizational hierarchy in his study of party workers. However, this observation of organizational and participatory overlap has not been applied to the work on civic or political participation more broadly. I will return to this issue again in the next chapter, but for now, it is suffice to say that I modified my interview recruitment strategy, and thus research design, during the pilot and early stages of the main data collection, as I became more aware of some of the problematic assumptions I brought with me into the research design.

²⁵ I did not receive any recommendations for out of state informants.

Data Analysis

All data was labeled and indexed in a Microsoft Excel document for ease of review. Paper copies of primary documents were also filed. Overall, I collected 1,132 documents, including primary documents, field notes, questionnaires, interview schedules, and interview transcriptions.

In the data reduction and presentation, I make use of some simple frequency tables in order to ease the interpretation of the qualitative data. This reduction is of the most basic kind, and can be used within an abductive strategy or framework (Robson 2002). The distinction from a positivist tradition and survey-based design is in the claims not made for generalizability to a larger population, the form of concept validity, and replicability.

Transcribed interviews and field notes were analyzed using QSR NVivo software. Overall, two methods of analysis are used throughout the thesis. First, NVivo was used in order to sort, code, and group documents and interview transcriptions in order to build concepts and categories. This process is not unlike clustering (Sage 2004), open and axial coding as in grounded theory (Bryman 2008: 543), or just plain coding (Lofland and Lofland 1995). The process of coding early, reading through transcripts (in the majority of cases, doing the transcribing), repetition, review, and revision into broader categories, as outlined by Bryman (2008: 550-2) was followed. In light of the problems with fragmenting data through coding, often sentences or long passages were coded, so that, for instance, the long description in chapter five of rewards and work involving ‘pebbles in a bucket’ were kept intact. This made it possible to go back and look at passages as a whole for further analysis, but also to compare passages or statements across all interviews within a particular code. In some of the analysis, particularly as in chapter four, five and seven, these codes were then grouped into broader categories which expressed a common theme.²⁶ The codes within a category are linked most often by similar kinds of descriptions or phrases, or in some cases, by similar use of language (Bryman 2008: 555). Categories, then, provide a way to organize codes into broader themes and link the data with existing

²⁶ This was mostly done through the ‘tree node’ feature in NVivo.

research on participation. I discuss this process in more detail as relevant in the coming chapters.

In addition to using language in the formation of categories, metaphor analysis in particular is used as a form of data analysis. Following Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) basic premise that meanings are expressed through metaphor, the specific metaphors that participants used are analyzed and unpacked. Metaphors are grounded in experience, structure ways of thinking and express complex meanings in compact terms (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Attention to the metaphors that people use in their everyday language highlights these meanings and structures of thought.

In sum, this chapter states the research questions, aims, strategy, and methods used for the thesis. In order to answer the questions about how campaign volunteers and field organizers understand their own participation, and what they are doing when they participate, I adopt use an abductive strategy and an interpretative approach to a case study of participation in grassroots Massachusetts Democratic primary campaigns. While these questions are posed because I believe they are intrinsically worthy in their own right in the context of current affairs, the research is undertaken in order to contribute to scholarly discussion about what participation is and means, and how the specific participation studied here may relate to broader questions about civic decline, parties, and organization. The criteria for assessing good research practice are outlined, including issues of credibility, generalizability, transparency and ethics. Finally, the data collection and analysis methods are stated. I address a subsidiary research question in each of the following chapters, returning to the implications of the research and reflecting on the research methods in the final chapter.

Chapter 3: Organization

Party organizations have long captured public imagination, and the US Democratic Party is no exception. When Will Rogers made his quip about the Democrats throughout the 1920s and '30s, he was capturing the sense of a party that no longer had the strength of an earlier, pre-progressive, bygone era. Yet big city machines like that of TJ Pendergast in Missouri, Richard Daley in Chicago, or the remnants of Tammany Hall in New York would continue to be the topic of political discourse and public interest in presidential elections and party politics for decades to come. Clashes with students and protestors at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago would later recast the image of the Party into one at war with itself, but both of these, of course, are a far cry from the highly organized stage-craft of the 2004 national conventions, where not a hair on John Kerry's head could be seen to move out of place in what was a methodical presentation heavy on symbolism and short on excitement.

Depending on one's political predispositions, each of these images of the Democratic Party can provide preferred heroes or villains. Intimately linked with whichever villain or hero one chooses is a particular image of organization: organized, hierarchical, and powerful; fractious, bickering, and disarrayed; or centralized, vacuous and irrelevant. These images of organization inform the normative judgments about politics, and parties, that we subject them to.

There is another way of seeing parties as well, that is, the view from those who build it, participate in it, and make it by their very actions. This ground-level view lacks the clarity of distance that a birds-eye perspective offers, but allows one to see an organization as unfolding, discovering its pieces in the way that one learns through participating over the course of several years and election cycles. How do these builders, these people on the ground get involved in party campaigning? And what do they get involved in?

In this chapter, I explore these dual questions as a way of opening up enquiry into what exactly grassroots party organization is. I begin by presenting an overview of

the literature on getting involved in collective participatory organizations, and the problems of understanding how some of those organizations, namely political campaigns and parties, are conceptualized as being separate or linked. In this chapter, I depart from the predominant way of treating this question of engagement as essentially being about motivations, leaving that subject for chapter five, and instead use the question of getting involved as a way to enquire about what participants are getting involved in: what they first did, where, with whom, and how that involvement developed over time. Next, I present a description of campaign organizations, and focus specifically on the field work part of a campaign, including the roles that participants take in campaign field work. This primary focus on campaigns follows the trend that most participants engage first in a campaign, and then gradually become involved in the party organization and a network of participants. While this is essentially an ideal-type presentation, it sets clear parameters for the scope of enquiry for the rest of the thesis, marking off what is to be studied here and what is left for others to study elsewhere. I devote the penultimate section of the chapter to describing this loose network of organizations and individual ties within a community, and well as the differences in this community for those who are field work organizers and volunteers. Finally, I conclude by contextualizing this view of grassroots campaigns and campaigners within the organizational studies literature on organizational culture and communities of practice.

Getting involved

The first question about participation is often, why do people do it? Looking at the literature on first getting involved can be informative for the topic here by focusing on how motives are sometimes framed as a supply-demand or push-pull issue, and what this tells us about images of collective political action organizations. That is, do people provide *supply* for organizations due to their own internal motives, desires and attitudes that would *push* them into action, or is participation dictated by the *demand* an organization has for participants, thus *pulled* into action by the incentives offered by specific organizations and organizational leaders, or by the course of public and political events at a given time? Much of this literature uses the logic and

language of rational choice, framing participation as a calculation of costs and benefits that, when added up together will predict whether or not people will be involved. More recent efforts within this tradition have attempted to marry supply and demand explanations to provide a more dynamic account of participation. What is important to note here is how this kind of analysis also frames narratives about the development and degeneration of party organizations.

Supply-side explanations focus on individual-based reasons for why and how people first come to be involved in collective political action. Some, such as Aldrich (1995) and May (1973), develop a general theory based on the intensity and extremity of policy motives – in short, those who care or whose views are the furthest from the mainstream will have the greatest incentive to get involved, far outweighing the costs (time, aggravation) of being involved (see also Fiorina 2004 for a more recent version). Others such as Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) develop a ‘resource model’ of participation which highlights how pre-developed skills and higher socio-economic status lower the costs of participation. In their explanation, knowing people who are already politically engaged and thereby extend invitations to join, developing skills through previous civic participation, and more time and money to spend on voluntary civic and political engagement all contribute to raising the benefits and/or lowering the costs of participation.

On the demand side, the question about people becoming involved in participation is focused on the incentives that organizations have for attracting members, and the ways in which they work to mobilize and persuade individuals to get involved. Susan Scarrow approaches the question of falling rates of volunteer membership and participation in British and German political parties by investigating whether and how the parties’ need for members (and volunteers) has shifted over a thirty year period (Scharrow 1996, 2002). She argues participation can be explained in part by looking at what parties think volunteers have to offer them in terms of resources – free labor supply for distributing materials and identifying voters, additional communication outlets, and a pool for fundraising outside state-based funding streams. Contrary to the belief that parties no longer have any need for volunteer members in the mass communication era, she argues that parties still do need

participants, though they may not have the power that they once did in previous mass party systems (Scarrow, Farrell and Webb 2002). Thus continuing participation can be explained in part by the fact that as long as they can still find them, parties will continue to try to attract party members and volunteers for strategic purposes.

Much of the work on social movements, and especially resource mobilization theory, foregrounds the micro-context in which people become involved (Gamson 1975, Scott 1990). This broadly emphasizes macro-structural components (political systems and how open they are; see also Norris 2002) related to participation. McAdam and others have also highlighted the micro-structural, in particular the role that organizations play, in inducing individuals to participate, and in particular the role of political entrepreneurs within groups who work to bring more people into politics (McAdam 1988). As Bennie points out, resource mobilization theory is still compatible with rational choice models, and Della Porta and Diani emphasize that social movement theory still sees actors as inherently rational beings (Bennie 2004: 69). As such, supply side theories which focus on organizations and contexts all do so within the framework of costs and benefits, and approach participation as a choice given certain incentives and structural arrangements.

Paul Whitely and Patrick Seyd (Seyd and Whitely 1992, 2002; Whitely, Seyd and Richardson 1994), meanwhile, have adapted the several-supply side models into a 'general incentives' model which takes into account motives, resources, and availability of opportunity. In so doing, they literally translate the costs and benefits into complex mathematical calculations, providing explanatory statistical models of rates of participation and incentives. Getting involved, then, is a matter of calculus, of costs and benefits, opportunities, supply and demand. When a certain number of benefits add up and costs are overcome, the transition from 'not participating' to 'participating' is achieved.

The image this leaves one with is of organizations and individuals as primarily instrumental beings. Yet as Gareth Morgan (1986) famously points out, there are many ways of seeing organizations – and such an instrumental view is only one of many. The instrumental view of organizations has also dominated studies of parties, in no small part because parties *are* instrumental organizations. There are, of course,

many who have problematized or diversified the model of what parties are instrumental about beyond the immediate goals of getting elected (e.g., Muller and Strom 1999), but the frame is still, predominantly, one which focuses on structures and instrumentality.

Parties and campaigns

As will be clear in the following section, participants describe getting involved in campaign field organizations and party organizations. In the literature on American political parties and campaigning, these two entities are often treated separately, with specialized texts and journals devoted to each. But are parties and campaigns really all that separate? The difference to some extent turns on which definition of party one uses. If parties are defined structurally – the party in government, organization, electorate – then campaigns are in the present day entities distinct from any of the party structures. Indeed, this is one of the important mid-twentieth century changes in party organization discussed in the introduction, where most candidates now have their own campaign *organizations* that are legal entities and structurally distinct from any one of the party structures. In a sense, each campaign organization consists of its own party triad: a candidate or representative in government, an organization, and voters in the electorate.

From a functional point of view, however, parties and campaigns are more difficult to separate, and appear more closely intertwined. Campaign organizations are organizations, but their function, like state party organizations and local or regional party committees, is to get candidates elected. As Herrnson points out, the party bureaucracy can organize local party volunteers into GOTV “auxiliaries” for a candidate, effectively merging party and candidate campaign organizations (Herrnson 1994). This is also the approach more often taken in the literature on political participation, where participating in a candidate’s campaign (especially in the absence of card-carrying party members) is taken as *de facto* participation in the party. Huckfeldt and Sprague take this one step further, arguing that the decline of ‘party’ participation only holds if one takes the narrowest of definitions of party

organization. Their South Bend, Indiana study of social networks and participation used working within a candidate's campaign as an indicator of party activity, leading them to be much less cynical about the decline in the quantity of party activity in the 1980s (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1992, 1995). In short, the participation literature essentially uses a functional definition of party when participation is defined functionally (doing a campaign activity) instead of structurally (being a card-carrying member). In this thesis I adopt a similar view, seeing campaigning as a party function and falling broadly under the definition of parties. This is not to say that the link between campaign and party organizations is still not a problematic or messy one, but merely that in the present case it makes the most sense to treat parties and campaigns as conceptually and inextricably linked.

Getting involved: the view from participants

All interviews started off with the same question. "So, how did you get involved in politics?" I would ask, and in almost every case it evoked a story. These stories were a good way to begin the interview in that almost everyone had a story or a reference for how they first became involved and they were familiar ice breakers, as one would be asked the same question by fellow participants in new campaigns or organizations. They provided a form of context, identity, and a way of knowing who you were working with if you knew who they first came in with and for what reasons. In this section, I present three of these stories that participants shared: one woman who went from anti-war volunteer to rookie staffer to campaign veteran in about three years; one man whose story starts with a friend's family being involved in campaigns; and one man who started participating in college, ended up a lawyer and when we spoke was still involved. From these and other stories, I pull out some common themes of this first getting involved, and then present an ideal type drawn from those stories, highlighting commonalities in material circumstances and reasons given for first becoming involved. 'Getting involved' was not the stark choice that rational choice theories would suggest, but involved a period of developing political awareness and views, followed by action – sometimes at the invitation of other individuals or organizations – and then the development of a continued pattern of engagement.

Importantly, these stories show how campaigns are predominantly the point of entry into party politics for people who end up participating in myriad different roles. Later in the chapter, in the section on organization, I discuss these roles in more detail.

The junior staffer

Jen was never particularly political growing up, and in fact the first vote she cast was for a Republican in an open primary. Then with the Iraq War she got involved, at first with a group protesting the war. That turned into an internship with the Howard Dean campaign in the primary, and then working in a swing state for John Kerry in the 2004 general election. After recovering from having “curled up and died” after the end of that race, she was a journeyman staffer on several municipal and city council races, before eventually moving to the state to work on one of the statewide campaigns this time around. At the time of our interview, she had no plans for anything past the campaign except a booked vacation.

The veteran volunteer

“I believe it was 1968, I think I was fifteen years old and I had a classmate, a close friend of mine, whose brother was running for state senate that year,” Dave told me. It was just “stuffing envelopes, holding signs on street corners, going to rallies, you know canvassing, leaflet drops, that type of thing.” Through that – “jeeppers that was almost forty years ago, huh?” – Dave met a bunch of people that he’s still friends with from the campaign, and has been involved ever since. “You get involved in one campaign and you find this sort of network of people, that you know are politically active, and you just get become part of that group.” Presently, Dave worked in municipal government, was chair of his local democratic city committee, working on a statewide campaign and preparing mainly for the general election. He was supporting one of the gubernatorial candidates, while also (and mainly) working to support the Democratic ticket once it was decided in the primary election.

The occasional strategist

“Setting aside like age 4 [holding signs] at the subway station with my parents in New York,” Bill explained,

The first real involvement was 94, when I was in college, volunteering on a state senate campaign in New York state. During the summer, you know, I just didn't have a job, I didn't wanna go home, so I did that instead. I just got hooked up with it by someone who knew that this campaign needed someone, and I was just, you know, sticking labels on things, nothing substantive.

The following summer he interned in Congress for a Senator, then worked on Senator Kerry's re-election campaign in 1996, then worked at the state house for a couple of years. That was followed by law school. When we met at a fundraiser over a summer for one of the gubernatorial campaigns via introduction from a mutual friend (who also knew I was looking for people to interview), he was working for a lawyer and not heavily involved in this year's campaigning – the exception being some advice giving and organizing for one of the down-ticket candidate's field strategy and organization.

Each of these stories, as we shall see, involves some common aspects of the getting involved stories from all the participants I spoke with. I divide these commonalities into several sections. I present descriptions of the antecedents to their campaign participation, and then first participation in collective action, which was predominantly in campaigns.

As in the case of Bill, many participants (64%) started their account of how they got involved in politics by mentioning early experiences with party or electoral politics either through a family or school setting or both. For the former, this included experiences such as one description of being taken into the voting booth as a child and being told to ‘always vote Democrat and union,’ or standing outside subway stops to hand out leaflets for a reform mayoral candidate forty or fifty years earlier. One woman in particular related how she was volunteered for the Kennedy 1960 presidential campaign by her parents, who failed to participate themselves but thought that her labor was as good a donation as any to a worthy cause and ‘the future of the Democratic Party’. Still others had a neighbor, relative, or close friend

who ran for local office and helped out on their campaign. In fact, friends and family members played a significant role in participants' initial experiences, as eighteen of the forty-six interviewed (40%) reported their first involvement as happening along with or because of someone they already knew.

Descriptions of school influences or general interest were also common, with a high school history course or participation in student government featuring strongly. In these cases, participants found that they had a certain aptitude or liking for politics, history or civics, and so went on to seek out such opportunities either while in high school or college. For one woman, this was a case of meeting a group of like-minded people in her introductory political science classes in college. In other cases, it was the experience of participating in student government that piqued their interest.

These accounts fall broadly along the lines of what we know from prior research, where political socialization primarily takes place in the context of home and school life during the early and especially adolescent years. The importance of friends, family, and personal networks operating as a recruitment avenue into political activity is also well documented (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). The main point worth noting is that the all participants who described some experience such as this had some link to politics previous to their engagement – either directly through a friend or family member who was involved, or via a broader interest in politics. Thus when they first came to participate in a campaign or party group, it was almost never the first time they were engaging with politics.

First collective action groups

Just as presidential campaigns are the most common “jump” into participation for voters (Campbell 1966, Gimpel et al 2007) so it is for participants as well.

Campaigns are by far the most common first experience that respondents reported taking part in, with over half doing so (see Table 3.1). One third (16 of 45) of all respondents reported volunteering on a campaign as their first activities. Another four were involved with an anti-war candidate's campaign, three worked on a campaign first, and two interned on one. All that these numbers suggest is what is

patently clear from participant observation, or to anyone who is familiar with the experience of campaigns: they are a major gateway for those who are new to party politics to get involved.

Table 3.1

First Activity and Group*	Number of Respondents reporting (of 45)
Volunteered on campaign	16
Movements/Anti-War candidate	8
Interned on campaign or in rep's office	6
Active in local/community politics	5
Joined Democratic group	5
Worked in politics or on campaign	4
Went back to school for political career	1

* - includes responses of activity undertaken whilst under 18

If one counts those who volunteered or worked for an anti-war candidate along with other anti-war engagement, then we see that getting involved through anti-war movement politics is the second most common form of first engagement. Eight people in total responded that they first became involved either through activity in an anti-war movement (both anti-Vietnam and anti-Iraq War 2003) or supporting an anti-war presidential candidate (McCarthy 1968 and Dean 2004, respectively). In the four cases where people reported working for an anti-war candidate, it was very clear that this activity was undertaken with the intention of trying to find some way to protest the war, which appeared to be qualitatively different from the intention of trying to get a particular candidate elected. As one respondent explained it, it was after a particularly frustrating moment of feeling helpless about what was happening in Iraq that he decided to help out the Howard Dean campaign. This kind of account was more similar to those who described organizing an anti-war hearing or media event than those who described deciding to join a campaign in that they both were expressed and explained with reference to personal convictions. Thus as a first experience with being active in politics, it seemed to merit the distinction from other forms of early campaign experience.

The remaining first experiences included being active in a community group or non-partisan political issue (such as a school board or planning commission), and joining

a democratic group. Of the five who joined a group first, three joined one of the Young Democrats or College Democrats groups while at university. One participant, who had previously always paid attention to the news with his parents, got involved with the College Democrats club at his university in order to get tickets to a Bill Bradley- Al Gore debate in the 2000 primary. And for one woman, involvement in organized party politics only followed after years of working as a community activist, when she was approached to run for office. Finally, another participant also described her choice of transitioning from a career as an environmental engineer to a decision to join the political process in order to work towards environmental goals and as such had just started law school in order to qualify as a lobbyist. In this particular case the choice of going to law school was linked to political action; her involvement in campaigns and political groups followed this first choice.

Taken together, these accounts provide several insights. First, it should be pointed out that the step into participation was often oiled by the fact that people were already relatively politically aware and often had friends or family who were involved. In this sense, becoming involved was not necessarily a hard and fast moving from one category into another. Indeed, in these explanations it is occasionally difficult to pinpoint where non-participation ended and participation began. Second, by far the single most prominent kind of collective action that individuals began taking part in was campaign organizations. They are much more prominent than party committees and standing organizations, in terms of first-time participation. While this may partially a case of pointing out the obvious, campaigns are not the *only* political organizations within a party, as we shall see. In the following section, I address campaign organization, and the role participants have within those organizations. I then discuss the other organizations that participants also get involved in.

Campaign Organization

For Anderson, joining the campaign for the gubernatorial candidate meant seeing that candidate speak at a local function, and then working with the fellow Democrats in

his town and campaign field staff to organize his local ward for the caucuses. He worked from home at night, calling local voters from a list of voters he downloaded off the campaign website. James joined the campaign he was presently working on when a colleague of a friend from another campaign called him up to interview for a staff position. He spent most of his days in the campaign office or out on the trail with the candidate at public events, town hall meetings, or local Democratic committee meetings. Bill received a call from an old friend from another campaign who was pitching one of the statewide candidates. At the behest of the friend, Bill started taking calls from the campaign field manager on how to organize getting enough signatures to get on the ballot, then went to the convention and spent 72 hours straight organizing votes to make sure the candidate did get on the ballot. Other than the convention, most of his time was spent on the phone from his office.

Audrey, on the other hand, simply went down to the state party headquarters and started making phone calls for whatever event or list that needed indentifying on the days she was there. She also did some organizing for her ward for one of the gubernatorial candidates, but that took up much less time. She also – of her own volition – compiled a list of civic and political groups for some of the campaign staff to get in touch with. Finally, Pattie spent most of her time working on environmental issues, but was so impressed when she heard one candidate speak that she dragged her husband to a fundraiser and had been busy helping out the campaign (in between her environmental work) ever since – organizing regional meet the candidate events, marshalling (and then keeping in line) all of her friends to support the candidate, decorating a float in the town parade with the candidate’s signs and bumper stickers, “yapping” to her doctor, the toll booth worker, and anyone who would listen about what a great guy this candidate was.

Each of these individuals joined the campaigns they were working on in different roles, occupied different geographic and physical spaces, and were assigned different tasks. Together, they all made up part of the campaign field organization. And though in each of these cases this was not the first campaign they were working on, these vignettes illustrate what is not markedly different from the spaces, places, and roles that many described occupying on their first campaign.

Table 3.1 presents an ideal type of a campaign organization for a candidate competing at the statewide level. It is an ideal type because it identifies those roles and functions that every campaign must fill, and in an ideal world there would be one or many staff members devoted to each role. On campaigns pressed for resources, and especially for smaller campaigns, these roles (especially at the paid staff level) would likely overlap so that one person would do multiple jobs. It does, however, give a sense of all the roles and functions that make up a campaign organization.

Any campaign involves fundraising, media, and research work, in addition to having the candidate himself or herself, and the candidate's support staff. On a small legislative campaign or in a municipal race, these roles will be much more ad hoc – often a campaign manager, probably paid, some friends to help advise on strategy and a band of more friends, volunteers and supporters to do most of the work without pay. The ideal type here refers more to the larger, statewide campaigns which have the money to hire more full-time staff (the same general model would also apply to a presidential campaign, though functional groups would be divided across states as well). Down ticket statewide races or high profile legislative races would fall somewhere between the ideal and the smaller-scale version. As noted in the table, most of the media, fundraising, and polling work on a larger campaign would be done by contracted staff or consulting firms.

The field work would be done by a combination of some paid staffers and managers, usually volunteer organizers for the smaller districts (a city, say, or a precinct) and volunteers to do the actual work of contacting voters. It is this last section, of the campaign field work, that I will focus the thesis on. It is useful to know what the other sections of a campaign include, especially as there are some field staff interviewed who filled these other roles in addition to doing field work. However, it is really with the combination of field staff and volunteers that the thesis is concerned.

An 'organizer' is defined as any full-time member of a campaign organization who is responsible for organizing and marshalling volunteers. *Usually* this involves being responsible for volunteers and voters in more than one district, and *usually* this is paid work – although in some cases, individuals would do this for free as part of an

‘internship’ or for a friend, or on a short-term (one month or more) but full-time basis. A ‘volunteer’ is someone who is largely responsible for contacting voters via door-to-door canvassing or phone contacting. In all the cases of individuals interviewed, this was done on a volunteer basis although theoretically one could be paid to do this work.²⁷

Some volunteers could, in fact, be responsible for organizing a relatively small district – that is, a precinct, neighborhood, or town. These organizers are grouped in with the ‘volunteers’ because they shared more similarities with those who were primarily canvassing in other respects – they usually lived where they organized/canvassed, they did it part time, most of their actual time with the campaign was spent out in these neighborhoods or precincts, and often the organizing work was done at home with the help of a laptop and mobile phone. Like Anderson, these participants were responsible for organizing a small region, sometimes in conjunction with other volunteers from the area. They also tended to actually do much of the voter contact as well, unlike a more full-time campaign/staff organizer. The staff organizers, in contrast, would spend more time in the office, with the candidate, or in contact with the precinct/city organizers, and less time directly in contact with voters.

The third role outlined in 3.2 is that of an ‘informal advisor’. Like Bill, these individuals were usually volunteering, and usually would spend most of their time only in contact with the campaign staff – even the managers of smaller campaign organizations. They did not necessarily do their work in the office, however, and would often work via phone from their own home or office space. Their hours worked were shorter than the full time staff, and more on par with other volunteers.

²⁷ Indeed, one statewide campaign was well known for using hired phone banks. However, this seemed to be more the exception than the rule in Massachusetts.

	Candidate support	Fundraising	Research	Media	Field		
Roles	Scheduler, 'body man,' advance team	Treasurer, finance committee members, donors	Research director, analysts, polling firm	Press secretary, producers, bloggers	Organizers: Field director, district directors, volunteer coordinator	Volunteers: Canvassers/phone bank operators, precinct captains	Informal advisors
Paid?	Often	Often	Often	Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Activities	Prepare candidate appearances, debate preparation, scheduling	Hold fundraising events, direct mail solicitations, online/email solicitations; accounting reports	Background opposition research, self-research (on own candidate), policy research and formation, polling	Write press releases, liaise with traditional media reps, produce direct mail pieces), radio/TV spots, newspaper advertisements, website content, including blogs	Set canvassing and Voter ID targets, plan GOTV activities (phone banks, canvassing), recruit volunteers, work with local organizations, distribute lawn signs, data management; attend local/public meetings with candidate	Telephone and door to door canvassing, putting up lawn signs, absentee ballot campaign, get out the vote operation	Create field strategy, introduce people to campaign help field staff plan events and ways to execute strategy
Location of primary activity	Campaign Office; public candidate events	Campaign Office; supporters' houses, public/invited forums; online	Campaign Office; office of hired research firms	Campaign office; online	Campaign offices; meetings for local organizations	Campaign offices; Semi-private spaces: doorsteps, home telephone calls, etc Semi-state spaces: public transit, busy intersections, town dumps, post offices etc	Campaign offices; remote via phone or email

In terms of how a campaign organization looked, then, it could be quite different depending on the role in which one came in. For volunteers, the campaign might be a distant office that one went to only occasionally, with contact happening through one primary staff contact and otherwise consisting of fellow Democrats, friends and family in the same area. For organizers, it would primarily be an office experience shared with other staff members, some of whom did the same work and some of whom might be responsible for other areas (fundraising or media, for example). Informal advisors occupied a space that was physically and organizationally ‘other’ – neither entirely of the full time campaign staff, nor rooted in the places and interactions with voters in a specific constituency. The organization²⁸ is thus spread over a wide geographic area and incorporates senior managers, mid-level organizers, informal advisors, foot soldiers and volunteers.

After the campaign: What next? What else?

If campaigns are the front door to party participation, then what comes after one passes through the doorway? As it happens, the next step involved much more organizational variety than the first step. More participants joined their local town or city Democratic committee compared to their first engagement. Others went on to more campaigns, found additional political groups, or stuck with a group of people they had originally worked with across a variety of organizations. Since it is after this first engagement that many people reported getting involved in the party organization, I present its features here. Table 3.3 summarizes the different roles and functions of the chartered Massachusetts Democratic Party sub-groups.

In addition, there are a number of organizations that fall under the Democratic National Committee charter but are also active at the state level, including the Young Democrats of America, National Federation of Democratic Women, and College Democrats of America. Further, some of the more rural and suburban areas organized their town or city committees into regional groups that covered all groups in a state

²⁸ Having recognized the other campaign organizational components, hereafter ‘the organization’ will be shorthand for ‘the field organization,’ excluding the other campaign divisions

legislative district. While not formally chartered, these committees acted as the de facto town committees for several groups.

Of all the chartered Democratic Party organizations, the town and ward committees are by far the most common ones to be involved in among the participants I spoke with, followed by the Young Democrats. 27 of 45 participants I spoke with were involved in their town or ward committee, 13 were involved in the Young Democrats, an additional 4 were members of the state committee, and 3 members of a regional committee and Democratic National Committee caucuses respectively.²⁹ These proportions are not meant to be representative of overall participation rates or patterns across the state, but simply give an indication of which organizations the participants I spoke with were involved in.

The party organization groups are also significant because in the absence of active field campaigning work to do, these are the main forums for participation and voluntary party activity. Several participants who were chairs of their town or ward committees described organizing meetings around election calendars, so that participants would have something to do in the absence of campaigning, but regular meetings would be suspended during the general election so that all members could devote more time to working on candidate's election campaigns. The party also holds an annual convention. In election years all candidates must receive 15% of the convention vote to have their name placed on the party primary ballot (in addition to receiving a number of signatures on the petition). In non-election years the party would have an "issue" convention where delegates would vote on the party platform. While highly important to some participants³⁰, several others told me that "nothing happens" there – these off-year conventions simply serve to keep the grassroots involved. In other words, in one participant's estimation, the issue conventions were basically participation for the sake of keeping participation. So at the very barest minimum, the party organizations assisted with candidate campaigns by urging its

²⁹ Some participants were involved in more than one party organization group and others not at all. Thus the sum total of party organization participation does not match the number of participants.

³⁰ One participant I interviewed was involved in an effort to pass a "Scorecard" which would rate legislators based on how often they voted for measures supported in the State Charter, and make it the Scorecard part of the party's documentation.

members to get involved in these campaigns, and they provided participants a place to gather and socialize in the absence of any campaigning work to do.

Table 3.3: Party organization roles and functions

	Town and Ward Committees	State Committee	Judiciary Committee	Affirmative Action Committee	Bureaucracy
Roles	Town committees: Chair, vice-chair, treasurer, secretary, outreach/affirmative action officer member, associate member	Chairman, Vice-Chairwoman, Elected members, appointed members	Chair and four additional members	Sub-committee of State Committee	Executive Director, Media officer, Field director; field district coordinators, Fundraising director
Paid?	No	No	No	No	Yes
Functions	Endorse candidates, raise funds for state party, adopt resolutions, voter registration drives, hold caucuses	Conduct state-wide campaigns, fill nomination vacancies for state-wide and congressional offices, create policy, raise funds	Ensure ward and town cmte. compliance with Charter, adjudication of disputes	Formulation and implementation of affirmative action plans	Support state committee in the running of campaigns and raising of funds; support Democratic candidates in the general election; run coordinated campaign

What else?

The participants I spoke with were no wall flowers. In addition to being involved in campaigns and party organizations, many were involved in other politically-oriented groups and civic organizations. These political groups ran the spectrum from running fully-fledged field campaigns in support of endorsed candidates and running their own candidates in the primaries to researching and endorsing candidates for elective office across the country. Both local and national, these groups provided an opportunity for participants to specialize on whatever issues or causes they were

most interested in. Finally, most participants also reported belonging to civic organizations. Table 3.4 summarizes the average number of groups that the participants I spoke with were involved in. The median is slightly lower, at a total of 5 groups rather than 6.

Table 3.4: Average number of groups participating in

	Party Volunteer group	Campaign	Political	Civic	Total
Average groups participated in	1.33	1.41	0.59	2.04	5.85

Differences by group – organizer, volunteer, and informal advisor

Having identified three different roles in field work organizations let me highlight some differences in the experiences as patterns discussed so far. As discussed in chapter two, participants were assigned to one of these three groups based on their primary role in the most important campaign that they were involved in at the time of the interview. Placing people into groups based on the ‘ideal type’ roles works in large part because the ‘ideal type’ is built from the collective accounts of experiences participants gave. In the course of the interview, they were asked to identify the most important campaign they were presently involved in as well as providing a description of what they did and, if applicable, the title they held for what they were doing (more often than not, most people did not identify a specific title, rather described what they were actually doing). Two clear trends emerge from looking at the data by role. First, while organizers and volunteers will share many experiences, common ways in which they started, or functions completed, there is also an additional set of activities, experiences, and ways of first getting involved that are *exclusive* to the organizers. In this sense, they operate as a sub-group within the common experiences of those participating in field work.

Second, while informal advisors are in many ways in between the volunteers and organizers (in ways which will be explored more in the next chapter), they are exclusively drawn from the ranks of those who have served as campaign staff in the past. In other words, previous campaign staff experience is a necessary precondition

for working as an informal advisor. Having been socialized as organizers their experiences and explanations are more like the organizers than volunteers. Where, in the coming chapter, I compare only organizers and volunteers, informal advisors have been grouped into the organizer category.

In terms of early experiences, the participants I interviewed who were currently working as organizers or informal advisors were more likely to cite interest in school or a sense of aptitude for what they were doing compared to volunteers. Conversely, those who were currently volunteering were much more likely to mention family members or friends who participated and got them engaged in politics. From the start, then organizers were more likely to frame their awareness of politics as one stemming from a sense of aptitude or thinking about involvement in terms of a career.

In terms of first group involvement, an equal number of organizers were first involved in campaigns as volunteers (seven volunteered at first compared to six who interned full time or were hired). However, of the twenty five currently volunteering, seventeen started off volunteering. An additional six volunteers went on to work full time on another campaign and were now volunteering again. Of the six informal advisors, four began by volunteering and went on to work on campaigns, while only two started off working. What all of this tells us together is that of those who started off volunteering on a campaign, about as many went on to either work on a campaign or continue volunteering. Present organizers could have started any number of ways. However, if one started off working, it was extremely unlikely to then end up volunteering (as only two of the forty five participants did). One could move ‘up’ into working, but rarely did one move ‘down’ into volunteering if one did not start there.

Finally, organizers were involved in fewer different campaigns at the time of interviewing when compared to volunteer and informal advisors were involved in even fewer campaigns and party organizations. This is not surprising – given that organizers were working full time (which often meant more than an average work week) they had less time available to work on other campaigns, whilst it was easier for volunteers to combine working for more than one candidate at once. However,

they were otherwise no less likely to be involved in party organizations, other political groups, or civic organizations. In sum, organizers and informal advisors have some distinguishing common experiences and explanations, compared to volunteers. But they also have a fair number of shared characteristics. There were no characteristics that were exclusive to volunteers.

Discussion

Taken altogether, what does the Democratic Party grassroots organization look like from the perspective of participants? Several key features stand out. First, although it has been mentioned only relatively briefly, personal ties play a prominent role in both pulling individuals into party participation and, for those participants who have been involved for more than one campaign cycle, continuing involvement “network of people,” as Dave called it. These networks include friends and acquaintances that one sees in and out of the different organizations. For volunteers, this was often the same group of people in a given geographic area; for organizers and informal advisors it can involve a network of friends and colleagues who are full-time political organizers and staff spread across the state. In this sense it was a relatively stable group of people who broadly were all on the same side and intermittently re-arranged themselves into different ‘teams’ (campaign organizations) – sometimes competing against each other in the primaries, often on the same or complementary teams in the general election.³¹ While the teams may not be exactly the same each time, they are from the same pool of players, some of whom have played together previously.

Second, as noted, candidate campaigns figure prominently as points of entry and as places of continued engagement. This is complemented by party and other political organizations and civic organizations as places of grassroots participation. As such participation in grassroots organization is really participation in grassroots organizations. Depending on the time of year or point in the election cycle, some organizations will feature as sites of more activity than others. However, the networks of personal connections are, notably, not matched by formal ties between

³¹ I am grateful to Eva Sorensen for sharing this metaphor with me.

organizations. While those organizations laid out in the party charter are formally linked to one another, there are technically no formal links from party organizations to candidate's campaigns (other than broad language about supporting candidates), nor are they linked to the non-party and non-candidate political groups. Nor are there any links between separate candidate campaigns. Moreover, in some cases organizational leaders are at pains not to coordinate activities with one another. While some town committees do endorse primary candidates others choose not to, and some unopposed candidates may work with party organizations in the primary and general election but this is on an ad hoc basis. Structurally, there is no relationship to speak of, functionally they may all do the same thing but only sometimes in a coordinated manner. The organization of organizations does not happen at a formal level between organizations.

Third and finally, participating in grassroots campaigning involves a certain set of activities that are relatively constant across organization and election cycle and are all centered on contacting voters. These include going door-to-door to speak to voters, phoning voters, holding signs for a candidate and putting up lawn signs, and speaking to one's circle of (less engaged) friends, family and colleagues about a candidate. It also involves organizing candidates, keeping track of voter IDs in a database, and recruiting fresh volunteers.

Given these multiple organizations, their lack of coordination, and very non-instrumental image created by all this, what are participants participating in when they do grassroots field work? This gets back to the question of what organization is. If one considers organization solely as structure, or coordinated instrumental action, then clearly there is nothing organized about grassroots field work beyond any one candidate campaign. But if one sees organization as something else – a body of activities and functions, a relatively stable group of participants who share short-term and long-term relationships with one another, and – as I shall show in the next chapter – a shared body knowledge, understanding, and sense of how to do those practices and activities, then one can see grassroots field organizations as a network of participants connected by personal relationships, practices, and understandings. In this sense, one can see it as an organizational culture.

I argue that the grassroots network of campaign organizations operates in many ways as a culture. There are many ways and means of defining culture, but here I follow Schein (2001) and his clear working concept of organizational culture. He defined it as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein 1993, reprinted in Shafritz and Ott 2001: 373-4). The major categories of phenomena that fall within organizational culture include, among others, group norms; espoused values; formal philosophy; rules of the game; embedded skills; habits of thinking, mental models and/or linguistic paradigms; and shared meanings (Shafritz and Ott 2001: 372). While most of the rest of the thesis will not focus on the culture of these grassroots organizations and their participants, it is a useful organizing concept for highlighting what they have in common and the phenomena that are part of the focus of study. It is useful for framing and thinking about how the enquiry is conducted.

Participants are bound together by common tasks, tacit understandings, ways of knowing, norms, relationships, and styles of engagement. To extend the team metaphor, these players not only play on the same teams over and over again, but all develop a common repertoire of playing, norms about how to play the game, and beliefs about the best way to play the game. Highlighting this network of participants as a culture serves two purposes. First, it allows us to work with existing literature on organizational culture to foreground and focus the analytical lens on some aspects of participation that are, in other cases, neglected or overlooked. Saying that something operates *as if* it were a culture engages the researcher in a form of interpretative research (Yanow 2004); saying that these grassroots participants operate *as if* it was/they were a culture renders these ‘cultural’ elements visible. This extends the concept of what participants participate in beyond both a structural and functional conception of parties. In other words, participation is not just fulfilling a campaign function, and therefore operating in an implicitly narrow, instrumental fashion. Participation involves being part of a network of people, and a series of organizations that not only do the same things but share ideas about *how* they should be done and *why*.

Understanding participation as participation in a culture that extends beyond any one campaign organization or party committee also has important implications for defining a party. From the idea here of participants bound by common sense of how to do common tasks, a functional definition of a party makes more sense than one which emphasizes just organizational structure. Yet this only covers part of what a party is. Placing this network of grassroots participants and what they do under the umbrella of being part of 'the party' expands the definition of what the party is to include customs, norms, ways of thinking, and habits or behaviors as well as simply structures, rules, and/or organized instrumental action. It provides the basis for re-interpreting the role of grassroots participants as part of the party and what the party is and becoming in the early part of this new century. It complements Galvin's (2008) account of a changing Democratic Party organization nationally. Where he highlights the rejuvenation of state party organizations, both financially and in their ability to conduct grassroots campaigns, this thesis provides an image of what, in the case of Massachusetts, has grown up from below, around, and through this investment in the state parties. In this sense organization, like participation, is not solely about instrumentality and functionality, but about networks, relationships, and teams of people who work together in changing configurations.

Importantly, Schein (1993) does not conceptualize organizational culture as a monolithic entity in which every single person shares the same norms, habits of thinking, or embedded skills. Indeed, it is important to speak of *sub*-cultures as well. In this sense there are limits to the notion that the network of grassroots participation observed here is meaningfully part of the Democratic Party, as there are some participants who, despite working for party candidates and regularly attending party ward and town committee meetings would decidedly not consider themselves part of 'the party,' nor would they be interested in working for the party. Some participants consider themselves working only for a specific candidate or in opposition to the party, and I will argue in chapter six that the campaign organizers in many ways operate as a sub-culture unto themselves. Neither of these arguments in and of themselves undermine the concept of shared activities, assumptions, and norms, but they do point to the limits of a cultural notion of party organization.

I will return to the issue of contextualizing this combination of party organization, and especially bureaucracy, and grassroots networks alongside other studies of participation in similar organizational combinations in the final chapter, and the implications for situating the study of political parties. In the next chapter, I'll explore what Schein identifies as embedded skills and group norms. Embedded skills are the "special competencies" that group members learn and are passed on without necessarily needing to be written down, and group norms are the "implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups" (2001: 372). I focus more closely on canvassing and doing field work, and what participants learn, how, and the knowledge they build up around practicing grassroots participation.

Chapter 4: Learning

A canvass: 6 August 2006³²

I got an email from Joe last Wednesday, after having gotten a phone call from him on the previous Saturday, which I ignored as I was out of town. So I emailed back right away and said I'd come canvass this weekend.

At 3:40 on the day of the canvass I got a call from Joe just checking in (we were supposed to meet at 3:30). When I finally made it to Joe's house and let myself in to the back, I found Joe there along with his wife and Karin, another canvasser, all ready to go. There were clipboards laid out for canvassing, with literature attached, pledge cards, a walk sheet, buttons/stickers for us to wear, a map of where we were going (handwritten, with the number of houses on each street), bottled water, bumper stickers, and pens. After Joe introduced me to the group, it was agreed that I would team up with Karin, who had canvassed for this candidate a couple of times already.

We went over the walk sheets, where Joe had put on every registered voter at the different streets, including Unenrolleds³³ and Republicans. The idea, what the campaign wanted, was to knock on the doors of all the D and U houses... Joe explained the coding system,³⁴ and what to do with the pledge cards, and we chatted for about fifteen minutes before heading out. We hopped into Joe's Prius and I asked if this was strong territory for the candidate. Joe reported that the last time they went out they only met one person who supported another candidate, and that was a guy who said you know, I would be voting for him [our candidate] but one of my good friends is very good friends with one of the other candidates, so I sort of have to vote for him...

I manned the board, looking at who was registered at a house and telling Karin the names so when she rang the bell, I went to the next door, and so on – leapfrogging doors was a trick for covering more doors in less time used on one of the last campaigns I worked, and we put it to good use here. The first house we went to was on a dead end street. No one answered the door, but there was someone out on the porch³⁵ – foreign, though, so we just left literature. The second house, everyone was taking a nap (and we already had one supporter down at that house) so we left some more lit with the guy at the door. As we left I noticed a car with a bumper sticker for the candidate in the driveway. And so on – we didn't talk to anyone on that street...

We stopped by a house where there were already a couple of supporters, I stuck my head in and said hello, we're in the neighborhood. The man was amused but said hello and thanks for coming by. There was a couple sitting

³² Adapted from field notes 6.08.06

³³ Houses with registered Democratic (D) and Unenrolled (U – no party affiliation) voters

³⁴ 1-5 indicated voting preference (1 strong for the candidate, 2 lean, 3 undecided, 4 lean against, 5 strong against), Not home/left message, wrong address/moved away/deceased.

³⁵ Many houses in this area had three units in them, making the porch a communal area.

outside in a garden, house sitting for whoever's place it was, but they were not registered voters. We also talked to a guy who came bounding down the stairs to the door wearing a blue Wisconsin Democratic Party shirt. He said oh yeah, he's our guy, right? And he was enthusiastic and happy to see us. He, however, was registered in the next city over, and the other folks in the house were registered in California, and wanted to keep their registration there. We swapped stories, and he offered his house as a rest point if we needed a bathroom, or water or anything... I talked to a nice guy who was unfortunately Canadian, while Karin went to the next door where she knew the woman, as they were in the neighborhood alliance together. After a long discussion about some local maps that were just printed up, the conversation turned the race we were canvassing for. She said you know I'm just not convinced. After more conversation that wasn't going anywhere, Karin agreed to help out with distributing the community maps, and we headed on...

A couple more not homes, and Joe caught up with us, said that there were a couple of houses we had missed, as one of the walk sheets wasn't in his pack. We headed back to the car get the extra sheet. I asked if he had gotten anyone home, he said not many. But the good thing about doing this now, Joe said, was however many doors you knocked now you didn't have to get them done in September. I agreed... We all headed back, and talked about the next time we'd do stuff. No phone banking, but the state rep who was up for re-election was doing some work on Friday doing voter registration. My weekends were going to be busy (they were also going out canvassing for the next two weekends, weather permitting) but I would join them for the Friday event. I grabbed the unused voter registration cards – two house mates still had to register – and we all headed home.

In reviewing my field notes from this and other canvassing trips, I was amazed to see how many of the little tricks, the lingo and the pacing of field work have faded from memory in the intervening time since returning to write up the PhD thesis.

Leapfrogging houses, finding people from outside of the district, how individual voters are referred to by their voter ID code (“She’s a 3”) were all everyday parlance for doing fieldwork, made rusty for lack of use. Yet at one point, I did know an awful lot about canvassing – knowledge that was shared by my fellow canvassers, tacit, and unremarkable.

How do people learn to do field work? Who teaches them, where and how? What is it that people need to learn, or feel they need to know, in order to do field work well? Do all people learn the same things, or are there differences between what is learned for people in different parts of the field work organization? And, what can that learning and teaching tell us about the organization and participation more broadly?

In the last chapter I introduced the concept of the grassroots political campaigning organizations as a culture, and in this chapter I explore learning as what happens after participants join grassroots campaigning organizations. Political participation takes place among a network of people who often know each other, share norms and ideas, and have developed ways of practicing politics. *Becoming* part of this group involves learning these norms and ways of practice. This chapter picks up from where chapter three leaves off with joining. It focuses on becoming, on the transition from participating for the first time to knowing how to participate well, from joining organizations to being a part of organizations.

While the literature on political parties and socialization does theoretically cover learning, in practice very little research has been done outside the focus on socialization of attitudes and beliefs. This focus reflects a broader research agenda on political socialization which foregrounds acquiring attitudes, beliefs and party identifications, but learning how to actually practice participation is by and large ignored. Instead, I turn to the literature on learning as developed in organizational studies, drawing particularly on Wenger's concept of communities of practice and Yanow's work on organizational learning and culture. Each in their own research emphasizes aspects of learning that are applicable to my material and data of volunteers, organizers, and informal advisors doing field work campaigning. After reviewing some of the salient aspects of these approaches, I present data on learning amongst grassroots campaigners. By building on the focus on practices, roles and organizational learning, I show how participants learn individually and an organization learns to campaign. Importantly, while there is room for conflict between those in different organizational roles, such conflict is by and large avoided through the multiple and changing roles individuals take and the presence of informal advisors. I finish the chapter by reviewing the concepts of local and scientific knowledge, finding that it is more a case of differences of scale of knowing than the quality of knowing when specific to grassroots campaigning. By focusing on the list of identified voters that a grassroots campaign produces as an artifact of organizational knowledge, I show how scientific and local knowledge can be complementary in their application and theorization. Finally, by focusing on learning I add another aspect to the reconceptualization of participation beyond its

instrumental focus, showing how participation is work, and therefore benefits from being analyzed like work and the insights gleaned from studies of work and organizations.

Socialization and learning

Socialization is the process through which individuals come to acquire the “attitudes, values, norms, behaviors and knowledge customary or desirable” for a group of people (Dodson 1990: 1122). The literature on political socialization has, by and large, tended to focus on the question of how people gain the political attitudes and orientations that they do. This may include attitudes towards authority, the law, and policy thinking, as well as partisan preferences and voting habits (Merelman 1973; Almond and Verba 1963). This tends to take place during adolescence and early adulthood, highlighting the importance of family and education (Almond and Verba 1963) in the process of socialization.

Previous research on the socialization of US party activists focused on the influx of unconventional, amateur participants into the party system, and the problems this presented for norms of party loyalty and organizational maintenance (Dodson 1990; Miller and Jennings 1986). Using survey and limited interview data, research showed that new party participants initially held hostile attitudes towards the party establishment, and Wilson (1960) and Kirkpatrick (1976) were among the most forceful in arguing that the changing motivations for party activism and attitudes about the party presented a fundamental challenge to the survival of American political parties. However, panel data suggested these attitudes were transformed into more traditional patterns of stronger party loyalty and identity, so that the potential threat to party organization and maintenance from new activists never actually materialized (Abramowitz 1983; Dodson 1990; Miller and Jennings 1986). In short, this research portrays socialization as the changing of attitudes about the party itself for a particular group of party activists over a twenty year period.

Presumably, if socialization provides the attitudes, norms, values and behaviors for people in a particular group, then it is a learning process. Yet as Dodson remarks the

socialization process itself remains “shrouded in the proverbial black box” (1990: 1123). The focus on attitudes and beliefs essentially overlooks process and practice. This can partially be explained by the theory of incentives and rewards for organizational participation which underpinned Wilson and Kirkpatrick’s prediction of party downfall (Kirkpatrick 1976, Wilson 1963). In other words, if the problem with new activists is that they lack the norms shared by other party activists (e.g. loyalty and party identity) which are crucial to maintaining the current party system, then of course these attitudes regarding the party are of primary importance for researchers. However, this still leaves learning practice (as opposed to attitudes) overlooked. Essentially, the instrumental view of participation which focuses on rewards for set motivations skews the research on learning towards attitudes and away from other topics.

In order to ask about how participants learn about practicing politics, then, I draw from some of the learning literature in organizational studies that is consistent with the view of organizational culture set out in chapter three. To recap, Schein identifies embedded skills and special competencies that organizational members learn and are passed on as part of organizational culture (Schein 1993). More specifically, Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the concept of situated learning, emphasizing how newcomers learn through legitimate peripheral participation (see also Wenger 1998, 2000), and Yanow (2004) has emphasized the role differences and kinds of knowledge differences, as well as the unique aspects of looking at organizational learning as a collective endeavor.

Wenger defines practice as what people “develop in order to be able to do their job and have a satisfying experience at work... It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (Wenger 1998: 47). Practice, for Wenger, is always social practice, and he defines it as being composed of several parts: meaning, community, learning, boundary, locality, and knowledge (Wenger 1998: 47). Crucially, being part of a community of practice involves engagement and doing with others; membership in a community of practice is not denoted by formal role so much as by engaging in practices and actions together.

Earlier, Wenger developed this concept of practice along with Jean Lave in *Situated Learning*. In that study, they focused on apprenticeships as a form of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991), by which they meant that apprenticeships were initially organizationally peripheral, providing newcomers the opportunity to learn practice by doing. Through the process of situated learning, newer apprentices become more central to a community of practice until they are in turn running it and teaching new apprentices (Lave and Wenger 1991). For Wenger, learning and organizational movement are part and parcel of the same process.

While Yanow notes that in many respects her work and Wenger's overlap, especially an emphasis on the collective quality of learning, she finds that learning is not necessarily coupled with organizational movement or progress within an organization (Yanow 2000: 260). On the contrary, individuals can learn simply to stay in the same role and in the same place and in order to do a job well. By taking the concept of learning beyond the apprenticeship model to look at how participants learn in all areas of an organization, such as in Cook and Yanow (1993), one can view learning as more about movement *into* an organization rather than through it.

More broadly, Yanow sets out an interpretative approach to organizational learning that sees organizational learning as not just the sum of individuals learning all together or anthropomorphizing organizations (Cook and Yanow 1993, Yanow in Shafritz and Ott 2001). Rather, it is focusing on "the collective and its situated acts (including language use) engaging the artifacts of daily work related practices, including the non-exclusively cognitive (such as tacit and kinesthetic³⁶ knowledge) and the non-exclusively change oriented" (2000: 256). One important point here is to note the role of artifacts as repositories of organizational learning. Flutes, to take one example, are artifacts that reflect the learning of each of the flute makers who know how to make one valve or fit two specific pieces together; a completed flute is a repository of collective organizational learning (Cook and Yanow 1993).

Recognizing the collective aspects of organizational learning, however, does not mean that organizational knowledge is necessarily uniform or agreed upon.

³⁶ Derivative of kinesthesia, "awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs in the muscles and joints" (OED), often referred to as muscle memory. Olympic athletes, for instance, have highly developed kinesthetic knowledge.

Organizational knowledge may vary across organizational roles, so that those at the organizational peripheries may be privy to specific, situated, *local* knowledge that is neither understood nor valued by central organizational managers and leaders. Instead, these latter organizational actors may favor scientific knowledge, that is, knowledge that is generalizable, classroom taught, explicit and theory-based (Yanow 2004: S12). Note that the concept of organizational learning as cultural-collective applies only to local knowledge and not the scientific kind (Yanow 2004: S21). In some cases, these differences in learning and therefore knowledge can overlap or contribute to tension within an organization between central and peripheral participants (Yanow 2004: S14). In other cases local knowledge may be disregarded or simply unknown (Yanow 2004: S9).

Thus while seeing organizational learning through an interpretative analysis as a collective endeavor this does not preclude the possibility of also recognizing multiple kinds of learning, or multiple ways of knowing in an organization. As I will show in the coming pages, both of these ways of knowing are present among grassroots organizers, though tension was not a key feature of organizational knowledge.

I start with what training programs and ways of learning participants engage in once they join a campaign, and the skills that they learn in order to do their job well. To employ a team sports metaphor again, these skills include both techniques (how to pass a ball) and ‘game sense’ (when to pass a ball and under what circumstances), and the most successful teaching practices focused on game sense rather than technique. I then explore how these skills, techniques, and trainings are different for organizers and volunteers, including the specific, contextual and local knowledge that more volunteers and informal advisors have access to, and how informal advisors serve as translators internally to campaign organizations. Finally I explore the list of identified supporters as an artifact of organizational learning and use it to reconceptualize scientific and local knowledge.

Overall, participants did not think that field work was particularly complex, and “it’s not rocket science” was an often repeated phrase when I asked participants about how they did it and doing field work well. As one participant put it, “It’s just a lot of grunt work, making the calls, using common sense.” Or as another said, “So creating

phone caps [quotas], I mean, it's nuts and bolts. It's not rocket science. And whether it's city council, state rep, or presidential, really when it comes to field and GOTV and voter ID, it's not that different.” Essentially, field work is field work and what participants learned had become taken for granted to the extent that they saw nothing remarkable in what they did. Indeed, in a very narrow sense what field work entailed was not difficult at all – picking up the phone and calling someone, knocking on a door, or just holding a sign is relatively straightforward. However, these are simply the techniques through which field work is accomplished. Understanding how to do these tasks – these techniques of field work – involves other skills and knowledge. These include game sense, how to handle oneself and be part of an organization, role expectations, and more. By asking about training and doing field work well, these additional aspects are brought into focus.

Training

Although a number of campaigning organizations offered some form of campaign training session, most participants learned on the job, while doing their first campaign participation. For organizers this could take the form of an ‘internship.’ Of those who did do a formal campaign training, most did not find them helpful. The sense that field work is not adaptable to book learning and teaching highlights the contextual, knowing-in-practice nature of doing field work.

Learning on the job

One informal way of teaching participants how to canvass is the process of pairing up new and old participants on the campaign trail. This was the case in my canvassing session with Karin. Even though I already had extensive canvassing experience before, because that August day was my first time with this particular campaign I was paired up so that I could learn how *this* group of people did things. This canvass was described as slightly different because they were casting a wider net (to include the unenrolled voters) and wider purpose (attempts to persuade, and

not just ID/turn out the vote). Pairing up new and old volunteers provided the opportunity for supervised doing under the watchful eye of a more experienced participant.

At one point, before another canvass, Joe actually organized a mini on-the-job training before heading out to go door knocking. Newer participants were given a chance to practice the canvassing script through role play, first by watching Joe do it, and then trying it themselves. This was an opportunity to recognize different scenarios – when a voter was a strong supporter and might be receptive to becoming a volunteer, when a voter was undecided and how to deliver a persuasion message, and when they were hostile and clearly not interested. This session was unusual in that it was the only time I saw or heard of using role play to prepare for a canvass. It was a way of practicing the ‘main scenarios’ option that was one step further than what was available through the canvassing information packet and still attempted to provide a practice-based learning environment.

This kind of practice, even as an exception, was more about previewing potential situations and thinking through one’s response than it was about memorizing a canvassing script or a set of facts that were outlined in the campaigning packet. Rather than a replacement of learning what to do on the campaign trail it was more like a supplement, the way an athlete might try a certain kind of pass before the game in order to build one’s muscle memory for when one actually had to use the practiced repertoire.

Internships

A similar practice-based approach to learning is evident through the experience of internships for many of the participants who went on to become organizers. As described in interviews, these internships involved not only learning the nuts and bolts of field work, but it was when they identified learning about the norms of doing field work in terms of the expectations for long hours put in for low pay, and how they gained access to personal networks, which produced future jobs. In this way, internships (and to a lesser extent shadowing on the campaign trail) function in much

the same way as apprenticeships in providing the space for legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Nine participants reported having completed some sort of internship, six in congressional or representative's offices, and three on campaigns. These internships were a key way to gain access to job and become part of a community of practitioners. Rather than controlling intake through any formal professionalization or guild, such as through the licensing of doctors and lawyers, the boundaries of a community of full time campaign practitioners are maintained through largely hiring individuals who are already a part of the network. Internships, then, are the key way of joining the network so that one may be eligible for future job opportunities. One participant, who had done all of his internships and college Democratic work in another state, highlighted his lack of local internship experience as a problem:

I found that it was difficult for me to actually break into the state house. It took me like two years almost literally to get in because I didn't know, I had no internships, you know I had all these years in New York. So I was kind of an outsider. I applied for a few things but didn't get them.

Access to networks was similarly described by those who had campaign internships starting out. But in addition, they described another feature: the rapidity with which 'intern' turned into 'full time job'. One respondent described why he decided not to do an internship early on in the context of explaining the different expectations he perceived between volunteering and managing:

I helped out on a state senator's race, and I was going to be a paid intern, where they were going to give you like \$200 a week, but you know, poverty wages, but then we were expected to work 12 hours a day. And at the time, I wasn't ready to do that. I didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't know that was going to be the expectation. And so after a week I was like don't pay me. I'm going to be a volunteer instead.

In terms of the actual activities that interns undertook either on campaigns or in representatives' offices, most of them described the work as basic or "clerical," "open the mail, that kind of thing" as one respondent put it. One who worked on a campaign as part of a university curriculum said "it was an internship, quote unquote, and you know just helping out with canvassing, and phone banking, that kind of thing." The use of 'quote unquote' here was meant to convey that the work he actually did, which was either informal or rote, was not the same as his expectation

of what an internship would provide in the way of career training. Given that the internship had been recommended by the university career services office, it seems reasonable to expect that he came into the internship with the expectation of career development but did not find any career development in the tasks he did.

These accounts of internships highlight how something that is ostensibly about learning how to do tasks (like internships) in fact functions as a gateway for becoming a member of a community of practice. In the case of the participant whose internships were done out of state (e.g., in another community of practice), it did not mean that this participant lacked the necessary skills and practice for doing political work, in the strict sense – but what he did miss was the opportunity to participate legitimately in a peripheral way for a particular community of practice, so that more central participation could become a possibility.

Similarly, the implicit lesson that both of the campaign interns gained had to do with the job expectations much more than how to actually do the campaigning work in terms of discreet tasks. Indeed, ‘long hours’ *is* the way to do campaigning work. In this sense, what is being taught via practice involves how to get things done – and for campaigning, getting things done involves very long hours, for low pay. This theme emerged again in discussion about skills learned, and will be explored further there.

Formal training sessions

A number of campaigning organizations offer training sessions for participants, ranging from DNC sponsored trainings on how to run campaigns to local progressive organizations on all aspects of local campaigning. Overall, however, most participants did not use these sessions. Further, of the eleven participants who did one, only three of reported it being useful. An additional three explained that they knew about the trainings, but avoided them on purpose. As one participant dismissively said, “I haven’t got the time for the institutes, I know how to get the people.”

The first issue for why these training sessions were not useful is the point at which they were offered and when participants found out about them. As noted, most participants began their participation on a campaign. However, the party and campaigning organizations often offered the training sessions as a way to keep volunteers engaged in the campaign off-season. Therefore the training was targeted to people who had already learned how to campaign on the job. As Joe put it, “I already felt I was proficient. Part of it was, I felt the trainings – well those two things are really the same. The trainings are geared to entry level. And if you're already way beyond that, it's not that helpful.”

The second issue was one of content. One participant, who had a particularly negative view of the party organization overall, described the sessions as “not skill-based,” and little more than anointed campaign gurus sharing war stories. More broadly, however, participants shared the observation that “politics is not that clinical. I mean you can't get a textbook on doing field, and again unless you're at scale where you can sort of, divide up the pie and the responsibilities in a very sort of technical manner, it's much more on the fly.” In other words, the actual practice of politics did not relate to how campaigns were presented in text. Indeed, the ideal-type description of the campaign I offered in chapter three accurately captures the major components of a campaign, but rarely are campaigns work in such a segmented manner. As one experienced participant summed it up, “I did attend some of those but quite honestly I found that most of my experience, most of my skills and knowledge is just from working on other people's campaigns. I kinda feel like it really can't be instructed by a class, it really has to be experienced.”

The accounts of the three participants who did find training useful further supports the idea that most learning takes place in a kind of situated learning, apprenticeship-style approach. Two of the three who found courses useful described themselves as outsiders: one as a progressive challenger to more established party Democrats in his area who took a course by a non-party progressive campaigning organization, and one postgraduate student who used what he learned in a course on campaigning to help a candidate in a district in another part of the state. Importantly, he only came to this particular campaign through a third party organization which was assisting the

candidate. Thus in both cases, then, the campaigning courses were useful for participants who did not appear to have access to the types of legitimate peripheral participation (through internships, previous participation of a similar kind, or through a mentoring relationship) in which they would learn how to organize and run campaigns. Finally, the third participant, who had been involved in campaigning for over thirty five years, liked the campaign training sessions offered by the party specifically because he liked learning how to use the new voter database files. The very exceptionalness of these experiences serves to remind us that for the majority of participants, learning was done on the job and often in a legitimate peripheral role.

In sum, the emphasis on practice-based learning foregrounds several important components of field work. First, it coincides with the notion of learning and knowing as something that happens in situ. The idea of a generalized, book-based and classroom taught knowledge did not mesh with what most participants described as their way of learning. Indeed, very few actually articulated a process of learning at all, but rather just described what they did as natural, the thing that was done. Only when they were asked about relating to new participants, or reflecting on how they might have changed practices from when they first started, were they able to articulate specific skills and ways of getting things done. The very tacitness of this knowledge and skill base thus underscores the extent to which knowing goes beyond the ostensibly cognitive to include those kinesthetic, aesthetic, and contextually based ways of knowing that Yanow emphasizes.

The Skills

If practice is what a community develops in order to do the job, then what is it that participants develop? Wenger emphasizes that practice includes a host of tacit as well as explicit functions, including the “conventions, rules of thumb, perceptions, sensitivities, [and] embodied understanding” that assist in getting the job done (Wenger 1998: 47). In order to uncover what some of these conventions, rules of thumb, and embodied understanding are I asked participants what skills they thought

they needed in order to do field work well.³⁷ By emphasizing the ‘well’ part, I hoped to enable the articulation of how participants practiced field work. The result was often a rich description of practice, stories about how to do field work, and examples of successful campaigning.

Table 4.1 summarizes the thematic skill groups that participants reported. The main themes that emerged from responses to this question are interpersonal skills, work ethic, organization, and leadership. One (somewhat surprising) result was also the number of answers relating to representing. Although these results are reported in table 4.1, I leave it aside here in order to take it up in much greater detail in chapter six.

Table 4.1: Skill and knowledge themes

Themes	Role Specific	Theme total	Theme % total
Interpersonal skills	All	41	30.0%
Work ethic	All	32	23.5%
Representing ³⁸	All	20	14.7%
Organization	Organizer	39	28.7%
Leadership	Organizer	4	2.9%
Total		136	99.8%

Interpersonal skills

The importance of being outgoing and friendly, along with organizational skills, was the most common theme. Interpersonal skills are grouped into four subgroups: outgoing and friendliness; enthusiasm and the ability to motivate; ability to take rejection; and engendering trust and making connections.

An outgoing, friendly demeanor and ability to talk with other people constituted the largest sub-set of the interpersonal skills group, accounting for 11 of the 41 answers.

³⁷ I also asked the opposite question, asking if what would make it more difficult to do field work well. Although these answers were less rich and expansive, they were still informative, and the results are folded into the section below.

³⁸ Discussed separately in chapter six

One participant summarized this as “Somebody that can talk to people. That will listen to people and is friendly.” In the long hours of canvassing and the few occasions of actually contacting a voter who might be receptive to the campaign message, being friendly was key to being heard. One campaign published a “top tips” for canvassing, with the top tip itself “Always Smile and Be Polite.”

On the negative side, many participants saw shyness, a dry demeanor, or hesitation to engage with voters and volunteers as inhibitive to doing the job well. This manifested itself as both an observation of temperamental suitability and in terms of the initial difficulties that beginners had to overcome. One participant who had started off as a canvasser and moved on to be a field organizer reflected on how her timidity at first made the canvassing difficult, saying “It’s definitely a really tough thing, socially, to go up and knock on someone’s door and try to convince them that you know how they should vote. And I was definitely, for a very long time, very hesitant about it.” With practice, however, most participants saw this social awkwardness as something that could be overcome.

Enthusiasm, motivational skills, and charisma were also cited as useful abilities. One participant gave the example of charisma as a way of getting volunteers to overcome their hesitancy to do the otherwise unpleasant aspects of field work:

You have got to be a good people person. Charisma is very essential. You’ve gotta, because field work, at its essence - it’s not rocket science. It’s about getting people who want to help who are maybe a little uncomfortable doing something, to do that, because that’s what you need them to do. People are initially uncomfortable knocking on doors, because you’re interrupting people’s dinner, or calling people on the phone, because some of them are going to get pissed [angry] at you and hang up, and there’s plenty of people don’t want to do that, and they’re all busy and they don’t want to come into the office, so it’s about motivating people to come in and help out.

Another participant joked that he was a “horrible cheerleader” and described the problem this caused: “My supervisor mentioned it when I was a field organizer in 2002... She said you don’t seem that enthusiastic. I’m enthusiastic just on the inside I am really [said while fake smiling].” That the lack of enthusiasm would be commented on by a supervisor indicates the expectation that it is a key skill for doing fieldwork. Even though this particular participant was not willing or able to muster

such enthusiasm in his work, he still recognized it as part of the expectations for doing the job.

Both of these stories allude to a kinesthetic kind of skill and intelligence in that the process of relating the stories in the interview involves particular gestures and motions in order to actually convey what was being done. In the process of explaining how to be charismatic, Chris went on to give examples of how he encouraged volunteers to stay engaged, saying “Always after they finish their little shift congratulating them and giving some pizza and then being like oh and can you come back ... excellent. And sign up here.” Giving the specific example of how this was done, he flashed a winning smile, leaned in and pretended to hold a clipboard with a sign-up sheet. Similarly, the organizer who was not good at being a cheerleader demonstrated his problem by offering up a humorous “false” smile, demonstrating how bad he was at being a cheerleader.

A third participant was much more explicit about this kind of interaction and how it related to field work, saying “well, as everybody says, there's no better way than to make your case than touching people. And quite literally, touching [he touches my shoulder]. People like touching, holding their hand, shaking their hand, and that really is one of the great things about politics.” While the glad-handing style of old politics has often been the source of many jokes, the physical ability to present oneself as friendly, outgoing, and warm was a kind of embodied skill that participants explained through their stories and actions in the interview.

In each of these interviews, the skills and knowledge being described were literally passed on to me in the most literal sense of being a kinesthetic, or motion-based communication, through the engaging smile, the humorous self-effacing failure, and the hand on the shoulder. If such embodied friendliness is key to doing field work well, no wonder that it was not perceived as ‘teachable’ in a classroom or through book learning – because most books (and at least not any campaign manuals I encountered) did not address the issue of kinesthetic knowledge and skills.

More broadly, this outgoingness and friendliness was an important way to establish a connection or bond with voters. One participant described the single most important

aspect of doing field work well was establishing some kind of connection with the person you were speaking with – whether it was on the basis of common experiences, common heritage, or common concerns, it did not really matter as long as you had created some form of connection.

Creating a ‘bond’ came up in another participant’s comments in a somewhat more cynical manner. One key for him was the ability to have “twenty second conversations, fifty, sixty times a night” with potential supporters at campaign events. The key for him was the skill in the conversation of making that twenty second conversation stick in the potential supporters mind: “we are going in there as representatives of candidate not only try and sell yourself but also try and make that connection to you know get people to identify not only with the candidate but with the person you just had the conversation with.”

While these participants spoke with a sense of both realism and pride about such interactions, another participant saw such short, repeated interactions as lacking depth and fulfillment: “You know the trouble is if you spend 30 seconds talking to somebody you can only always get to a very surface level talking about things. And you kind of repeat that next door, over and over again you never really get to - I mean the whole process encourages, or I should say discourages, any depth of thinking or conversation about issues.” Under such short and restricted circumstances, the ability to actually connect with voters was difficult, requiring a certain ability to engender feelings of trust or connections quickly and with conviction.

Finally, taking rejection was seen as positive for coping with the many ‘no’s’ which occurred in between ‘yes’s’ in response to queries for both volunteering and votes – especially for those participants who felt shy or lacked confidence at first. For organizers, it could be a matter of getting ten no’s for every yes. For canvassers, it was a matter of high door knocking and call volume simply to reach people, only a portion of whom would respond affirmatively.

Work Ethic

The second theme expressed by participants in all roles was about hard work. The most prominent sub-theme was the ability to have persistence and patience, and the exhausting aspects of work were linked to the need for a strong work ethic. One sub-theme that stands out clearly here is also a sense of willingness for doing field work. Rather than being a sense of broader desire or interest in issues and politics, this was expressed as a participant's actual willingness to do the immediate and concrete tasks of going and knocking on people's doors or call them unsolicited.

Dedication, persistence and patience together was the largest cluster of answers within the work ethic theme. One participant summed this up as "You need to be dedicated, and tireless, and that's pretty much it."³⁹ Another reported that the best thing he learned over the years was the need to own good shoes – a nod at the amount of time and hours one has to spend walking from door to door. One organizer referenced to his blue collar roots and his desire for participants with a similar work ethic, saying "give me a kid who went to a working class school over an ivy leaguer any day... If you're gonna work for me, you better be aggressive and willing to go all out."

In terms of the willingness to do the work, one volunteer said, "you need people that are willing to do the work. Because it's not glamorous. People walk into campaign headquarters and you know, if people are doing their work it's not glamorous. Like you said they're licking envelopes, and they're stuffing envelopes, and they're standing on street corners in the rain." Willingness was discussed particularly with respect to new participants or first experiences. As one volunteer put it, "So as far as skills, the only skill is, you're willing to just kind of suck it up and go to that first house." In this sense, 'willingness' is really too simple to even be a skill, but it was generally recognized as good for being able to get the work done.

³⁹ This participant then went on to give a much more detailed answer of a number of other skills which one needed as well.

Organizational Skills

Organizational skills are grouped into four sub-themes: data-driven planning, analytical ability and assessment of what is practical, leadership, and preparedness and detail-orientation.

The most straightforward sub-theme is the importance of following a data driven plan, and much of this related back to The List as the primary artifact of work. List production, in this sense, was perceived as being an organizational, data-driven and data-based task. One woman explained this, saying “[Former Democratic governor] Dukakis always says this is the most important part [Voter ID] and it is. You've got to get people out to vote, you've got to identify your voters in order to get them out.” The importance of a solid, well-organized and tracked voter ID program capable of producing a good list was paramount for many organizers.

A few participants also highlighted the importance of leadership and an ability to give direction among organizational skills. While this was not too common, a couple of participants articulated this ability as being beyond mere management skills, but summed up the ability to inspire, direct, and manage at once. As one organizer joked, this was not about giving many options, but one option at a time, saying things like “Oh you can't do that because you have a broken leg and you can't walk? Ok then we'll put you on the phone instead. You don't give them options, you tell people what to do [laughs].”

Many participants also placed a premium on preparedness and organization, linking it with the ability to get other things done, like voter identification and volunteer management. Two women linked organization with the ability to follow up after a voter contact, one saying “you should be organized so you follow up, which is part of the persistence.” For organizers, preparation was part of managing volunteers well, so their time was efficiently spent and they would come back again. Chris' example of plying volunteers with pizza and sign-up sheets came in the context of “And also being extremely well organized, and organizing your volunteers in a very consistent way.” Being organized was, well, key to being an organizer. Being organized also

involved paying attention to all the details – pizza, sign-up sheets, reminder phone calls, and more.

Indeed, in canvassing for two different campaigns, each provided a packet of five to fifteen pages, including multiple reminders of how to report data after the canvass, tips for canvassing, maps, voter identification information, talking points, backup instructions in case of rain, and the weather report for the local area. These detailed instructions are an example of the kind of information that organizers had to assemble for each volunteer or canvassing group on a weekly, if not daily basis.

Unlike the kinesthetic sense and skills of applying personal charm that were part of the interpersonal skills set, the descriptions here capture a very different set of skills: organization, attention to detail, and adherence to sophisticated or data-driven plans. If the previous set could be characterized as personal skills exercised in an immediate physical and social context, the emphasis on data-driven plans and attention to all things non-personal provides a contrasting image on de-humanized activity. In this sense, the skills that participants needed in different roles were involved different kinds of knowing and knowledge.

In sum, learning how to do field work well involved a variety of techniques and understanding of the field work as a complex game. While the techniques themselves were “not rocket science,” learning to use them involved learning the different situations one would encounter and how to make decisions about what to do whilst involved in field work. Moreover, doing field work well involved a number of additional skills, like friendliness and the ability to connect, a strong work ethic, and how to organize people and tasks. This knowledge was kinesthetic as well as conceptual or cognitive, and most people learned by doing rather than in a classroom based session. Of course, not all participants learned the same things, and there were important depending on role.

Community knowledge

In addition to having certain skills and sensibilities, participants explained the importance of having certain kinds of knowledge as part of doing field work well. Knowing a local community, including who the players were, the local customs and political traditions were also part of successful field work.

Several volunteers and some organizers, especially those with experience in local campaigns, and those who helped in an informal advisory role emphasized the importance of tailoring that data-driven voter ID plan to a community. Joe described a lengthy argument he had been having with a statewide campaign organizer about the need to shift from what he saw as a rigid and impractical plan that was uniform for the whole state to something that was more carefully tailored to his area:

I showed her the numbers. And I said I know you're going to be calling everyone so don't canvass voters. What you should do is register everyone you can, if there's one thing you can do in here, I can't speak for the whole state but here, [register voters].

The emphasis on tailoring voter ID plans combines the idea of a very data-driven, organized, segmented plan with knowledge about the community which could lead to improved plans. For experienced organizers, using a data driven GOTV plan was not mutually exclusive from incorporating community knowledge of campaigns; rather the two could be combined for a more efficient and effective operation.

Similarly, according to the party Field Manual one of the most important things a ward committee member can do for a campaign is to help candidates use knowledge about a community in their campaign. In the section entitled “What can state and local committees do to help elect Democratic candidates?” and after descriptions of media, voter ID, and precinct captain work, a few sentences sum up the contribution of local knowledge:

Sharing local knowledge and customs is probably one of the most important roles for a town or ward committee to play. Where it is customary for sign holders to stand, knowledge of local bylaws and customs for lawn signs, assistance with developing walk routes for candidates and notifying the coordinated campaign of events that a candidate or surrogate should attend are all examples of areas where a local committee's knowledge is invaluable (p. 18).

In interviews, bringing such local knowledge to campaigns was one of the tasks that many locally-based volunteers and informal advisors brought with them. One informal advisor described his job as telling the campaign staff, “do this, do that.” On follow up he elaborated, “Yeah, like how to get signatures. Where should we go? Go to the dump. You know.” The town trash heap is probably not the first place one would think of doing political campaigning – unless you know that in many suburban or rural communities there is no curbside rubbish collection or recycling, and so the one place that almost all town residents will have to go is the town dump. Another participant on a different campaign made the same kind of observation about knowing when and where to campaign in her community, saying “Where do people go? The post office closes at 12. And most people only can do it on Saturday mornings. So that’s a good time to be there.” Understanding a community for field work purposes meant understanding how everyday life was structured, the restrictions and patterns that fellow citizens and voters faced in going about their daily activities.

Importantly, not all of this information can easily be translated from one community to the next. For instance, not all towns had dumps, and not all post offices closed at noon. In short, the local specificity which makes community knowledge so useful in a given place also limits its applicability to that particular community, making it difficult to generalize for application on a broader basis. In this sense local knowledge was more easily translated into practice in specific communities than it was for a campaign overall and therefore was of more use to those working on specific geographic regions – who were more often volunteers and precinct-level organizers than staff organizers. Informal advisors, such as Bill who talked about the town dump, aided campaigns by passing this knowledge on to staff organizers so that they may use it in planning and practice. Like Joe’s example, however, passing on this knowledge did not always mean that it was taken into consideration.

The second emphasis within the community knowledge theme was on knowing the *right* people to recruit locally to support a given candidate. Opinion leaders are those individuals in a community to whom other people turn to for political opinions and leadership. Recruiting opinion leaders to supporting a campaign was seen as a useful

and efficient way of garnering support in a community. One participant succinctly summarized this as “knowing the community means who are the opinion leaders, hitting them first. Say what selectman⁴⁰ is likely to be a Democrat, let’s get him. Let’s think, who is in the garden club, let’s get that person, because that person has a network, get them on your side.” For this participant, the implication of getting opinion leaders is that once they support a candidate, they can bring votes with them to the campaign.

One participant described at length a local campaign won in part through the use of ‘dear friend’ cards, in which volunteers send cards to all of their friends telling them who they are supporting in an upcoming election and asking for their support as well. I asked why the cards were helpful, and she replied “Opinion leaders. To be honest with you, I probably have had 15 people ask me already who I’m voting for for Governor. I mean, you want people who have influence over other people, who think this person or this issue is being supported.” One statewide campaign also used ‘dear friend’ cards, and it was a well known field work task among participants such that saying ‘dear friend cards’ rarely elicited a question for further elaboration. Another participant similarly identified himself as an opinion leader among his friends and family, noting that even while living out of state, he kept abreast of Massachusetts politics knowing because his friends and family would also ask him who to vote for.

The concept of opinion leaders appeared in some of the very earliest research on voting, in the Columbia School studies. Berelson et al (1954) applied Lazarsfeld’s ‘two-step’ model of communication to voter decision-making practices, finding that for those voters who had not made up their mind until relatively late in the campaign season relied on the opinions of those whom they respected or found more knowledgeable. These opinion leaders were found in all strata of society and acted as intermediaries between mass-media communication and individuals in the same functional relationship as with other forms of mass-media communication, most notably consumer information and advertising (Berelson et al 1954). While the two-step model became one of the most important (and therefore controversial) theories in communications studies, and was translated into studies of political

⁴⁰ City or town officer. Smaller municipalities are often run by a commission of three selectmen and women. Local elections are nonpartisan.

communication and social networks, these socially-based studies operate largely independently from previous focus on campaigns and party participation. So while the concept of opinion leaders is well established, the applicability of having opinion leaders as campaign participants deserves further enquiry. I will return to this subject in chapter six.

For now, the key point is to recognize how doing field work well involved knowledge about specific communities – structure, local practices and customs, and *who* in those communities were the people to speak to about politics. This community knowledge is somewhat role specific in that it applies most directly for those who are working in specific geographic regions and communities, and is not necessarily well suited to the organizer roles that were responsible for a broader area and more general practices. One of the key roles that informal advisors played was alerting organizers to community practices and how understanding them could be incorporated into overall planning.

Knowledge, learning and roles

Throughout the chapter, I have described different kinds of knowing and ways of knowing – kinesthetic and cognitive, analytical, organizational, tacit, explicit. More broadly, Yanow has developed the idea of ‘scientific’ and ‘local’ knowledge, where the latter is “the very mundane, yet expert understanding of and practical reasoning about local conditions derived from lived experience” (Yanow 2004: S12). ‘Local’ knowledge should also be distinguished from the community knowledge, described above. While community knowledge could be considered a sub-category of local knowledge, ‘local’ encompasses a broader notion of situatedness and practice-based knowing that is not limited to knowing in a specific *geographic* locality. In contrast, ‘scientific’ knowledge is theory as opposed to experiential based, technical-professional, and academy based.

Much of what has been described falls easily within the local knowledge concept. Individuals learn through practice and by doing, their ways of knowing go beyond cognitive forms to include kinesthetic knowing, techniques as well as game sense.

Local knowledge applies in different ways to those in different roles. Those who are volunteers and geographically-community based organizers are privy to, and make use of, understanding of “local conditions” including customs and people. But staff organizers engage with local and practice based knowledge too. They may do so with the very specific community knowledge (especially with the help of informal advisors), but they also develop their own expertise through practice and especially internships, rather than course or classroom-based learning. Highlighting the role of internships connects with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) work on legitimate peripheral participation and situated learning. While what organizers learn is organization and management, in the specific cases of the field organizers I spoke with, this was still *practice-based* learning of management.

Nor is there any reason to think that organizers in Massachusetts are an anomaly if compared with groups of Democratic field organizers in other parts of the US. While there is now a professional school of political management at George Washington University, it is possibly one of only two available in the country, and does not appear to be a necessary step for becoming an organizer. Indeed, one participant I interviewed received a degree from the GW program but was disappointed to find that this had not yet helped with getting employment with any of the campaigns; instead he was offered volunteer work (much to his chagrin). In short, organizers learned how to organize in situated learning contexts, becoming experts through practice rather than classroom experiences.

What, then, of the counterpoint to local knowledge, “scientific knowledge”? In contrast to local knowledge which is based on practice, common sense reasoning and actual events, scientific knowledge is located more in the academy and aligned with theorization. Yanow finds organizational-managerial approaches which value scientific knowledge are within the ‘rational-technical-scientific’ tradition where “knowledge is made up of detached, universal, generalizable facts that can be known objectively, absent the context of their origin” (2004: S18). Science implies generalizability, knowability, and certainty in a way that local knowledge can never really produce.

It is in this vein of thinking about the preferencing of scientific knowledge that we see some commonalities with the expressions of some organizers. One participant, who earlier noted that field work cannot be taught in a classroom, went on to say that at first “I didn't appreciate how much it could be brought down to a science.” He then gave the example of in an earlier race spending a lot of time and energy trying to register young voters for a down-ballot legislative race, only to find that most of them did not vote. Instead, he now understands how to divide his time between fundraising, door knocking, and other activities. “Science” here implied a rational approach to understanding the returns on the investment of his time and energy.

The clear commitment to Voter ID and developing voter databases was also spoken of as key to winning by some organizers. The language and use of databases imply a kind of scientific certainty. However, a closer examination of how a database – essentially, a sophisticated list of voters – works and is used as an artifact of field work provides a different view. Rather than being exclusively a product of rational-scientific thinking doing, and knowing, it incorporates and collates local knowledge of field work practitioners. The main difference between the ‘scientific’ knowing of field organizers and the ‘local’ knowledge is one of scale, and voter lists and databases act as a kind of boundary object which bridge the two.

The List

If the primary purpose of field work is to identify a campaign’s supporting voters and getting them to the polls on Election Day, then the primary artifact of field work is the list. The list is a database of names, addresses, party affiliation, and previous elections participated in. It should cover all voters in a given political district. It can have additional data points of varying degrees of specificity: previous campaign contributions, pro-life or pro-choice preferences, previous primary candidate choices, and any other piece of information which may indicate how a voter is likely to receive a particular candidate or campaign. The most important fact for any one of these entries, other than name and contact information, is voter identification: party

ID and whether they are a strong or leaning supporter of a particular candidate, undecided, and leaning towards or strongly for another candidate.

Lists are an organizational product. In the canvassing narrative which started this chapter, we were given one section of the list, relating to the streets and houses we went to canvass. Like most campaigns, this campaign in particular had limits on access to data depending on one's role in a campaign: precinct captains can see, enter, and print information in a certain area but not revise it; organizers are given access to a wider area and may revise; and only a few key people in a campaign will have access to all the information. In some campaigns, voter and contributor data are kept on the same database, with fundraising personnel able to access one kind of data, and field work personnel another kind.

Lists are boundary objects, which “inhabit several intersecting social worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each. They are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites” (Star and Giesemer 1989: 393). Lists change depending on who uses them, for canvassers they are a place to store rich details in the notes or which tell only part of an interaction with a voter, but for organizers they are columns of refined names, dates of contacts, and ID numbers. Star and Giesemer state that boundary objects are “weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual-site use” (1989: 393), and similarly only very few technicians see the ‘back end’ of a database which is common to all (the codes, rules, and syntax which make it run) but individual users will have well defined interface screens specific to their roles.

A specific language revolved around aspects of lists and list management as well. Joe “cut” a list of streets and homes that we canvassed on that August day. Another participant, an organizer, described “breaking out walk kits” – a reference to putting together the voter lists, clipboards, and other material for doing door-to-door canvassing. Coding voter preferences could be short-handed by reference to a number, such as “she’s a 3.” At one point during my time in the field, a participant told a tale of canvassing in a heavily competitive district. When they arrived at a house door with their button or t-shirt identifying who they were canvassing for, the

resident did not even bother coming all the way to the door after seeing them, and instead yelled “I’m a one!” before promptly turning back to whatever he was doing.

One of the key problems that organizers and volunteers alike came across was in dealing with the quality of the lists they were working with, as different campaigns had different lists of varying accuracy. Lists could include the names of people who moved away, had changed party affiliation, or were no longer available. The worst situation a canvasser could come across was asking to speak to someone who was deceased, which was both a waste of time and could (often) offend the surviving family members. As such the quality of voter lists was a real concern. As one informal advisor complained, “I’d like to get one goddamn voter list that’s up to date. There are people who get paid good money to do this, and they’re crap.” Because most organizational lists were held by private companies, initial list quality was their issue.

But, throughout the course of a campaign, lists were changed and improved through the use and input of volunteers and organizers, canvassers and staff – not just in terms of voter ID, but providing updates as well. One woman in an interview noted that she had half a dozen sticky notes of people to take off the voter list that had moved away or died in her community. The informal advisor who complained about quality of lists went on to remark that he often went to “local communities” to get better lists. In his particular area, a fair number of residents moved away for the winter. Results from canvasses carried out every weekend were entered back into the database and improved the accuracy of a list throughout a campaign.

Indeed, in some campaigns the database technology improved to the point where participants could enter what they knew about voters without having to formally go canvassing at all. One afternoon, Joe showed a few of us how to set up an account on one candidate’s database system so we could log in and identify the votes of our friends, family, and network of people regardless of where they lived in the state. There were restrictions on changing information that was already there, but you could add voter IDs. While this is not practice knowledge in the same way that knowing who to see in a community and how to practice politics may be, it does

illustrate how lists were in fact a collective organizational product. No one person ‘made’ a list, just as no one person personally found out who every supporter was.

Thus producing the list with voter ID information requires the collective knowledge and action of everyone in a field work organization. It involves knowing how to do one’s own part of the job, and it involves ‘knowing’ a voter’s preference. Volunteers, precinct captains, and those who go door-to-door will know how to cover a street as quickly as possible and, possibly, who to ask first. They will also ‘know’ the voter ID of people in a given area through their door-to-door work (though we will come back to this knowing later in the chapter). Organizers and list managers will know how to tweak, filter, and cut lists, but not know the details for a smaller area; campaign, database or field managers will undertake routine database management, update files, and match information with existing lists. They may ‘know’ a voter’s preference based on prior voting record and whatever other information is available in a voter file. The list as end product – the one that is used for GOTV efforts – will thus involve and include the input of everyone in a field work organization.

The list serves not only as an organizational end product, but a reservoir of collective knowledge and action. In order to build the list volunteers must know how to nominally enter data on a sheet and walk from door to door or how to make phone calls – but they also develop a much more extensive knowledge about how to get this done that is built up through interaction with other practitioners. Similarly, organizers will also learn how to manage lists and databases, and how to build and manage volunteer organizations that can complete good lists. To say that an organization learns how to build a list is to reference the skills, knowledge, and practices that organizational participants collectively build and use to make a voting list. From a distance, these databases have the appearance of being exemplars of a rational-scientific approach to doing field work. Yet on closer inspection they can be seen as these reservoirs of collective knowing and learning.

The absolute end product of a candidate’s list of supporters includes only the very essentials: name, contact information, and 1, 2, or 3. This essentialized information list lacks the richness of knowing, learning, and practices that have gone in to creating it. Nowhere on such an end list does it say that in order to reach those

supporters campaign field workers had to go to the town dump or the post office on a Saturday morning, and yet without that information the list might not have been quite so specific nor so accurate. Focusing on the richness versus essentialized versions of the list bring the issue of scale to the fore, and it seems that this is the key difference between organizers and volunteers in terms of how they engage and know locally. Participants in both roles learn in social contexts and are experts at what they do, but the need to cover a larger geographical area makes the specificity and richness of community difficult to sustain on a grander scale. As such, knowledge becomes essentialized down.

The process of turning rich accounts and face to face interactions among friends and neighbors, between strangers in door to door exchanges and family members in conversation into names, voter IDs, and addresses is the fundamental translation and bridging work that lists do as boundary objects. Lists and list databases enable the systematic, geographically removed, and scientific world of GOTV organization to link with the situated, rich, and specific world of identifying voters through systematic door-to-door canvassing or informal enquiries in personal networks.

The comparison of scale has important implications for understanding the relationship between scientific and local knowledge. While the two may seem to be at odds with one another (and especially in the way that scientific knowledge is often preferred over local knowledge in other domains), in fact, to follow Dewey, no theory, scientific knowledge, or academy can ever come from anything but situated contextual experience (cf Menand 2001). Knowledge is not created out of thin air but out of experience; though a scientific-rational explanation may aim at generalizability to such an extent that context becomes less relevant it still comes from a context in the first place. Scientific knowledge – whether rational, academic, or otherwise – is simply local knowledge writ large.

In the case of databases and field work, the paradox is that an interpretative approach is necessary to understanding how collective-cultural kinds of learning and knowledge can be transformed into scientific-rational knowing. What appears to be scientific knowing is, among the community of field work practitioners, the summation and essentialization of collective organizational learning: tacit and

kinesthetic knowing, practices developed through situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation.

Discussion

Learning and knowing constitute important dimensions of participation in grassroots campaigns. Skills and techniques, learning and knowing in different forms help participants do field work to a standard that they consider good and make the experience less difficult. Learning constitutes an important component of the organizational culture of field work to the extent that these skills and tacit ways of knowing that are unremarkable makes participation in these grassroots campaigns. Imagine if, in the opening example, no one had undertaken canvassing before. There would have been no leapfrogging doors, no shorthand language, and no lists to work off of and improve. The practice would have been entirely different.

Learning makes participation skilled, and turns doing participation into being a good participant. In this sense, learning actually makes instrumentality possible. In order for participants to be able to complete tasks or do the activities which are part of participation and lead to rewards, they have to know how to do those activities. So while the literature on socialization into political parties often overlooks learning, practice and process, it is crucial to the very instrumentality which skews research away from looking at process.

In Wenger's (1998) words, practice is what people develop in order to be able to do their job, and it is social. Beyond instrumentality, learning to participate involves becoming part of a community of practitioners. It is crucial to becoming a participant, to transitioning from first joining in an organization to being part of it. Where chapter three introduced the concept that participating in political campaigns involves joining not just structures or fulfilling functions but also becoming part of a community, this chapter fleshes out how some of the ideas which make the community of practitioners are learned, and demarcates sub-groups within that community. In the next chapter I will explore meanings and motives that participants expressed which, like skills, are not prior but learned and acquired through practice.

Chapter 5: Motives and Meaning

Rational choice theory, as applied to political participation, is primarily geared towards explaining individual motivations in the context of collective action. Traditionally, the first topic would be ‘what are the motives and reasons for participation?’ That this question is addressed halfway through the thesis is in line with an alternative approach to understanding participation. Rather than seeing motivations as inherent and prior to action, I believe that they are learned, just as skills, ways of doing things, and participatory practice are learned. Becoming part of a community of grassroots participants involves developing motives and meanings for participation.

Moreover, I believe that if questions about motivation are geared towards understanding why people participate, then the research questions need to unpack the concept of motivation. While the rational choice and closely related incentives systems theories which highlight the importance of motives have animated important research in participation, it is the consistent shortcomings of such theories, in their inability to see individuals as socially situated actors and contemplate individual influence on collective outcomes to which I turn my attention in this chapter. I aim to show how learning more about the meanings of participation for campaign participants can complement what we know about the role of motives in animating political participation. In the first section, I review the basic logic of rational choice theory and incentive systems models as applied to political participation, along with some of the salient critiques of these theories. I then show how the shortcomings in these theories translate into a problem with concept validity when applied to an analysis of motives for political participation. In the second section, I explain a different approach to data analysis which I apply to the interviews with participants. I then discuss the merits of not reducing ‘irreducibly social’ concepts into multiple analytic categories, taking a grounded theory approach to building categories out of reasons, and linking the different categories to one another, and finally I outline the differences between organizers and volunteers in the answers they gave.

By refocusing on motives *and* meaning, I aim to show how we can reach a more robust explanation for why people participate in political action. Whilst many scholars have done much to adapt a ‘thin’ notion of rational choice into ‘thicker’ versions which account for a variety of incentives, I believe that some of these efforts would be better served by not trying to make non-instrumental reasons sound instrumental. Rather, we would do better to on and modifying the inroads already made in incentives and rational choice theory by distinguishing between political practice for the sake of achieving ends and political practice as a socially and culturally situated set of activities rendered meaningful by socially and culturally informed beliefs.

Rational choice models and incentives systems: insights and assumptions

Mancur Olson’s argument in *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965) is now largely familiar. If an economically rational person can receive the benefits of collective action without having to pay the costs of participation, and if his participation is likely to have so low an impact on the outcome as to be negligible, then no rational individual would participate in collective action. Olson’s main contribution was to show how unless certain circumstances were met – that is, unless there was enforced participation via the closed union shop, or unless alternative incentives were offered – rational individuals would free ride over joining in collective action.

As addressed in chapter three, this approach put collective action to a cost-benefit analysis for each individual: does the cost of my time and money outweigh the benefits I will receive from the intended policy outcome? Is my time and energy key to the outcome coming about, or will it happen regardless of my own participation? By emphasizing the high costs of participation and the low benefits, Olson highlights how individuals have so little influence with regards to collective outcomes as to be negligible.

By posing the problem of collective action as why people *would* participate, Olson points towards the possible solutions for overcome collective action problems. One is

to offer selective benefits for participation, benefits available only to those who actually participate. This line of reasoning explains altruism by transforming it into a form of selective benefit. For Olson, altruistic behavior can be explained as a selective psychological or moral incentive, as when they act as a guilty conscience that must be assuaged through action, and they only work because “the crucial factor is that the moral reaction serves as a ‘selective incentive’” (Olson 1965: 61).⁴¹

Clark and Wilson utilize Barnard’s neoclassical notion of human resources theory of organizations to link membership motivation to organizational goals. They invoke a similar intellectual turn to Olson whereby “the desire to achieve an abstract social good may, or course, be subsumed under the ‘egotistical motive of self-gratification’” (Barnard 1938: 139, in Clark and Wilson 1961: 131 f2). From this, they create a framework based on material, solidary⁴², and purposive incentives for participation. Material rewards are those which have a monetary or cash value; solidary incentives have no cash value but “come from the act of associating and include such rewards as socializing, congeniality, the sense of group membership and identity, the status resulting from membership, fun and conviviality, the maintenance of social distinctions, and so on” (Clark and Wilson 1961: 135). Finally, purposive incentives are from “the stated ends of the association rather than from the simple act of associating,” including the “enactment of certain laws or the adoption of certain practices (which do *not* benefit the members in any direct or tangible way), such as the elimination of corruption or inefficiency from public service, beautification of the community, dissemination of information about politics or city life, and so forth” (Clark and Wilson 1961: 135-136). For Clark and Wilson purposive incentives are *by definition* ends-related, and they cannot be separated from those ends. Finally, in a point echoed in most empirical work, any particular organization can and does offer a variety of incentives to its members, for instance discounted theatre tickets, social occasions, and a (met) purpose of beautifying one’s city.

⁴¹ This may be somewhat misleading. Even though the quotation of Olson is accurate, the conception of selective psychological benefits he describes here is not usually associated with a ‘classic’ rational choice model. See McCulloch (1990) for a similar discussion, Mansfield (1995) for a more classic summary of rational choice models.

⁴² ‘Solidary’ is Clark and Wilson’s original term. While most authors have changed the terms even whilst using the original system or similar concepts, discussed below, I will continue to use the original words throughout this chapter.

In both works, the authors relate the problems or puzzles of motivation back to issues of organizational maintenance. For Clark and Wilson, the rather scary prospect of broader social changes is that material and solidary incentives will no longer do; organizational leaders must turn to purposive incentives to attract members and thereby become constrained by the whims of their memberships. Olson, on the other hand, explored the necessities of creating artificial contextual conditions which would overcome the problems of free riding, such as the closed union shop or other coercive methods. However, while organizational maintenance was important to both of these authors, this focus on the role of organizations faded in subsequent studies of participation, such that the participation and motivations has largely become reframed as a question of individual motivations, absent any connections to organizational or contextual surroundings.

Rational choice models and incentives systems: critiques

Rational choice theory may only be utilized by a relatively small circle of researchers but, as Robert Grafstein points out, this paradigm has been, and continues to be critiqued by a much broader range of scholars (Grafstein 1997: 1040). Of the many critiques, three are of particular salience for the present discussion. First, rational choice theory emphasizes to a large extent a conception of the individual as completely separable from his or her social environment, rendering people as a-contextual. Second, rational choice models and incentive systems create a false separation between the notions of ‘solidary’ and ‘purposive,’ where those two notions are intimately related to one another. Third, rational choice models, and to a lesser extent the incentive systems model, frames the question of rationality as related to whether or not one individual can change the outcome of a collective endeavor, thus assuming a priori that individuals have little to no influence in collective action.

The first issue is that the benefits from ‘thin’ rational choice “come at the considerable price of imagining each individual as fundamentally separate from others” (Mansbridge 1995: 144). But when it comes to understanding reasons for political action of any sort, rational choice assumptions rely on a distinction of self

and other in order to hold up the most central tenet of action, that it is ‘self’-interested. This is problematic because so many of the ways of thinking, framing issues, and language that is used to animate action and render it meaningful is “irreducibly social,” (Mansbridge 1995: 144), by which we mean those ways of thinking and ways of language are not exclusively the result of any one individual’s thoughts and language, but the shared language and meaning created through intersubjective processes. By focusing its analytical lens solely on the individual, rational choice models are unable to “see” these intersubjective meanings, and thus they remain “unknown” on a fundamental level even when acknowledge as important (Yee 1997: 1028). To the extent that individually-based rational choice and incentive systems models do not fit with viewing the individual as an essentially socially situated phenomenon, and to the extent that intersubjective meanings are not knowable, they will miss some aspects of understanding the meanings which underpin political activity.

Certainly, there are some notable attempts to try and incorporate social norms and ideas into rational choice models. Riker and Ordeshook (1968), and Mansbridge points out, did actually note the importance of a sense of civic duty in motivating Americans to vote, although this notion of duty was later stripped of much of its power as a social norm in Riker’s later writing (Mansbridge 1995, Riker 1995). Ferejohn (1991, 2004) and Ferejohn and Satz (1996) have contributed much to a ‘thick’ rational choice theory by incorporating social norms and ideas. Nevertheless, as Yee points out, even when such thick rationality models take social norms into consideration, fundamental questions about norms and ideas, such as their sources or means of transmission, remain unaccounted for, so that they remain ‘unknown’ in a fundamental way (Yee 1997).

The second issue is the briefly made distinction between the categories of altruistic motivations labeled ‘solidary’ and ‘purposive’ reasons in Clark and Wilson’s incentives system in Mansbridge’s critique of rational choice theory. She points out that this is the same distinction that goes by other names in the work of Dawes et al. (1991), Jencks (1990), and Sen (1978), and which she elaborates as the concepts of ‘love’, which is a nonprivate, nondyadic sense such as ‘love of country, and ‘duty’,

akin to commitment or conscience (1995: 140). According to Mansbridge, Monroe's (1991) argument that in the case of some altruistic actors the sense of being a part of a common humanity blurs the boundaries between conceptions of the self is an example of the difficulty of distinguishing between doing something out of a sense of solidarity or of duty.⁴³ Thus, the two categories of 'solidary' and 'purposive' reasons perpetuate the notion of ideas, outcomes, and purposive beliefs as also being disjointed from social context.

The question of whether or not participants can have any effect on collective outcomes, has received the most attention of the three listed from scholars of civic and party participation. Theoretically, as Olson argues, the influence of any one individual on the outcome of a large collective action is so small that in a cost-benefit analysis no rational individual would conclude that the benefits of his or her action outweigh the costs.⁴⁴ Despite the fact that Olson discussed at length the variables which could make participation rational, for instance if the input was large and the collective relatively small, the irrationality of participation is what stuck. As Verba et al explain, "according to the rational choice approach, activists who consider that they got involved in order to promote a collective policy goal are deluding themselves in imagining that their contributions would enhance appreciably the probability of achieving the joint end" (Verba et al 1995: 110).

However, empirical research consistently shows that a large proportion of participants in collective civic and political activity cite the desire to have an impact on outcomes as one of their primary reasons for participation (Bennie 2004, Clarke et al 2000, Constantini and Valenty 1996, Conway and Feigert 1968, Kornberg and Smith 1970, McCulloch 1990, Miller and Jennings 1986, Nakamura 1980, Norris 1995, Scarrow 1996). This leaves one with the troubling options that either most participants are "deluding themselves" or that rational choice theory got the efficacy calculation wrong. This, in turn, would cause some serious trouble for the clarity and efficiency of describing the free rider problem.

⁴³ This point is less clear in Monroe's original article (1991), where the emphasis of argument is more on the role of cognitive frameworks and self identity

To get around this conceptual problem, some of the most prominent research has attempted to account for efficacy in a variety of ways which circumvent the actual question of whether or not individuals can have an influence on collective outcomes. In their studies of British political parties, Whitely and Seyd (and others) measure an individual's sense of efficacy but make no mention of what the outcomes desired may be (Seyd and Whitely 1992, 2002; Whitely, Seyd and Richardson 1994). Verba, Schlozman and Brady, make the opposite choice and emphasize that "for some acts where the input is very large (a campaign contribution) and the scope of the desired outcome is not too large (a local election, a specific policy affecting the actor), the belief that an individual can make a difference may be less unrealistic" (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995: 103). So while Whitely and Seyd focus on the *belief* in one's own efficacy rather than efficacy itself, for Verba et al, the question is not whether or not participation in collective action is ever rational, but whether it is possible that individuals may in fact be rational about their influence depending on the participation itself and context.

More creatively, Finkel, Opp and Muller in different combinations have attempted to circumvent the question by theorizing that participants in collective action have a notion of group efficacy, so that a conception of a group's ability to influence outcomes replaces the shortcomings in individual influence (Finkel 1985, Finkel and Opp 1991, Muller and Opp 1987, see also Klosko et al 1987). Nevertheless, the issue of individual influence remains problematic, so that they suggest future research should "investigate empirically the question of whether individuals are unaware of or misunderstand the principle that their own participation will have a negligible effect on the realization of their public-goods preferences or whether they consciously reject this principle in favor of an alternative general rule that success of collective action depends on the groups acting together as a unified whole" (Muller and Opp 1987: 563). In sum, efficacy continues to be an issue where empirical data and theoretical conception point towards very different conclusions.

Translating concepts and conceptual difficulties into research

The problems of decontextualizing individuals, separating notions of social and purposive reasons from one another, and conceptualizing efficacy translate into problems with data analysis that empirical researchers must grapple with.

Specifically, the problems come when attempting to assign the particular reasons that individuals give for their participation into the analytic categories used by researchers for analyzing their data.

Empirical research in political science on motives for participation uses some combination of categories which sum up the individual reasons for participation. Researchers who rely on the incentives system theory assign specific reasons to solidary, purposive or material reason categories. Those who use Olson's system assign reasons to collective outcomes, or selective social, selective psychological, or selective material categories.⁴⁵ While some reasons are consistently assigned to the same categories, other reasons are consistently assigned to different analytical categories. Two of the specific reasons that participants give for their participation, civic duty and party attachment, are consistently assigned to the different categories. I argue this is because these categories are fundamentally incapable of accommodating the civic duty and party attachment reasons because they are the manifestation of the theoretical problems outlined above.

If a participant says that by participating they are fulfilling their civic duty, what does that mean? Depending on which authors and incentive systems one uses, fulfilling one's civic duty falls variously in the categories of party-related, other impersonal, selective civic gratifications, altruistic, cultural, and instrumental public goods incentives. For some of the researchers, the difference in category allocation depends on the consideration of influence. Thus Finkel and Opp utilize their notion of group efficacy to group civic duty along with other influenced, outcome-based reasons for participation. Verba, Schlozman and Brady also take 'civic duty' out of the realm of un-attainable collective goods by considering these answers to reflect the extent to which participating assuages a guilty conscience – thus it is a 'selective civic gratification.' So for both sets of authors, the civic duty reason has some direct

⁴⁵ For a summary of these different systems, see Appendix 4.

selfish benefits for the individual. For all the other authors surveyed, civic duty does not have any self-interested benefits and is a form of altruism.

Even further, among those authors who list 'civic duty' as a purposive or altruistic reason there are implicit differences as to the *source* of that incentive. Miller and Jennings list it under 'partisanship,' Whitely et al as 'altruistic', and McCulloch as 'cultural' (Miller and Jennings 1986: 93; Whitely et al 1994: 94; McCulloch 1990: 503). Only McCulloch elaborates his view of civic duty as a selective cultural incentive deriving from "the internalization of what Dowse and Hughes call a 'sense of civic duty,' that is, a cultural norm that the individual should participate in public affairs" (McCulloch 1990: 503). Following McCulloch's logic, Miller and Jennings would then see parties as the font of feelings about civic duties, but elsewhere they make reference to "pervasive national political culture" in shaping the personal incentives of activists from both parties (Miller and Jennings 1986: 99). In contrast, Whitely et al place civic duty in the altruistic motives category, bypassing their own social norms category. By implication, are such civic duty motives not related to social norms, but just a sense of altruism?

To summarize, if you wanted to know what it meant when an activist said they were doing their duty as a citizen, the meaning would change depending on which incentive system you utilized. The activist could either be acting out of an altruistic sense of doing good, with no direct benefits available to them nor any real benefits from achieving a collective end; they could be assuaging a guilty conscience, thereby getting some personal benefit from the act of participating; or they could be acting instrumentally towards to real achievement of a concrete goal, thereby fulfilling their civic duty in a most literal sense. The source for that civic duty could be a 'pervasive national political culture,' the political party which organizes the immediate participatory setting, or, possibly, an individualized sense of altruism.

Party attachment

Party attachment gets a similar scatter-shot treatment, like the notion of civic duty. In some cases it is treated as its own independent reason, separate from other categories,

in other cases it is treated as a social incentive, and in other research it is considered to be part of the purposive/ideological category. Two sets of authors treat party attachment as its own category (Finkel and Opp 1991, Miller and Jennings 1986), one as an “other” altruistic reason (Conway and Feigert 1968), and one as non-allocatable (McCulloch 1990). Further, Whitely and Seyd first treated it as an altruistic reason in their research on the Labour Party (1992), but in their surveys on the Conservative Party describe party attachment as an “expressive” reason.

Whitely and Seyd’s switch from considering party attachment as an ideological reason to one in which party attachment is an ‘expression of group belonging’ is also an interesting indication that probably party attachment is not solely social, nor solely ideological. Conway and Feigert depart from the social/ideological divide with their “other” category and assign to it both civic duty and partisan attachment reasons. Only Miller and Jennings and Finkel and Opp, who put party attachment as its own category, avoid this problem. In sum, party attachment crystallizes the problem of attempting to separate social and purposive reasons.

Rather than attempt to fit square pegs into round holes, I apply a different approach to analyzing the reasons participants give for participation. During the interview, after asking about how participants got involved and discussing field work in general, participants were asked what they found most rewarding and least rewarding about field work on a day-to-day basis. At the end of the interview, they were also asked what their experiences meant to them at the end of the day, and why they kept on doing it. These questions differ in an important respect from the way motivation questions are often phrased in survey research. The questions used do not ask why participants *first* got involved – in part because in these interviews they were already asked *how* they first got involved. More importantly, others have noted the problem of possible post-hoc reconstruction when asking about motives for actions in the past – in other words, that people project onto those prior events the way they feel about them now (Verba Schlozman and Brady 1995: 106). This seems to be a problem worth taking seriously, in that it makes unpacking motivation more difficult by mixing up first reasons for joining and what may be different reasons later on. Instead, asking about what participants find rewarding and not so rewarding, and

what their reasons are for staying involved now, in the present tense, is both more precise and presents the opportunity for participants to reflect more broadly on the meaning of their participation.

The following analysis is drawn from transcripts of the answers to both these questions. I start with the specific reasons participants gave and build *up* into categories which are logically coherent according to the answers participants give. I present the data in several stages, starting with the reasons that participants gave for their participation. I then attempt to put those reasons into categories, and discuss the issue of sorting the reasons, comparing the resulting categories with the incentives systems categories. The main departure is in distinguishing ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract’ solidary and purposive reasons from ‘abstract’ beliefs which encapsulate the dual love/duty notions, and are essentially intact as a reason. Then, I look at how these categories relate to one another, and the role of organizations in helping to translate ‘concrete’ gratifications that come from activity into abstract beliefs about the good life, and back again. Finally, I review the differences according to participants’ roles.

Data

Table 5.1 shows the reasons that participants gave for participation. The numbers in the right-hand column show how many times participants gave that answer, giving a simple indication of how frequent different reasons were. In order to make the meanings that participants gave clear, here I present some of their answers in their own words, and tie them back to the concepts of social or purposive reasons, and the concept of influence where applicable.

Table 5.1: Reasons for Participation

Reason	Number of times given
Work on something I can make a difference in	23
Hope/ belief in better nation/world	12
Recognition/ respect from colleagues and peers	11
Seeing people I like	11
The game/excitement of politics	10
Self-respect/responsibility/ duty	9
Connecting/ convincing voters	8
Being in a community that shares my views	8
Elect Democrats/ Beat Republicans	7
Make good policy/ concern w/ direction of country	7
Politics is what I do/addiction	7
Being with people who share my beliefs AND work for them	5
Good for career	4
Serving my community/ people like me	4
Pass something on	3
Good government/ Social justice	3
Be informed	3
Working with good people	3
Faith in humanity	2
May run for office	2
Make my voice heard	1
Total answers	143

Work on something I can make a difference in

The reasons grouped together under this heading were all similar in that they were related with a very specific notion of making a difference in mind and were by far the most common answer. One participant described the satisfaction of helping members of the public with particularly problems like getting a social security check, or accounts of feats accomplished on the campaign trail. For instance, one woman reported:

The fact that we got all these delegates for her, and we got all these City delegates, that was big... we really made a difference. And she'll say that. We've really been her point people here in the City. So that's gratifying, when you can really make a difference for somebody.

In all the cases, it was the satisfaction of doing work with concrete ends that was satisfying. Unlike the conception of ‘influencing policy’ as used in much of the survey literature, the differences participants cited were those that were part of their daily experiences and doing political activities.

Hope or belief in a better nation/world

In contrast to the ‘making a difference’ reasons, these answers were all similar in that they were phrased in more abstract language, and did not convey a sense that participants thought about achieving a better world in the same concrete, goal-oriented way which they thought about making a difference. Sometimes the explanations were simple, even point blank: “Hope.” “For a better tomorrow.” Pattie, who first got involved in politics via working on environmental issues, described how her belief in making a better world kept her going by offering an extended metaphor of adding pebbles to a bucket:

What keeps you going? You can't get discouraged. What keeps you going is those people who burn out, they think, if I do this, it's going to win. If it doesn't, they don't see, they don't look at the problem or the issue in a different way, this pitcher or glass, and you're just adding this pebble, and eventually it'll fill. Although you maybe didn't stop the re-licensing [of the nuclear power plant], you have added a pebble that can maybe help someone who will be in that process next week, you can share what you learned, your emotions, your legal knowledge, to help them...When you go into any of these campaigns, for me it's clean energy, if you go in thinking this is it - you have to have a bigger picture. Have we won? No, it's getting worse! [Laughs] You gotta look at it in a bigger picture, or you're going to burn out and not do anything.

This respondent contrasts the short-term gains and goals such as winning an election with the longer term issue of finding clean energy. The ‘bigger picture’ is an allusion to a notion of the world as a better place she describes at other points in the interview, as a world with environmentally friendly energy solutions. This ‘bigger picture’ is a very distinct concept of what the world should be – it is a vision of the good. She distinguishes the ‘bigger picture’ from the outcome of any one campaign, and for her the long term goals and beliefs in a better world are *essential* to staying involved because they balance out the highs and lows of short term campaigns.

Without a solid belief that her contribution can eventually make the world better one pebble at a time, one would just “burn out and not do anything.”

She also has a particular place in this ‘bigger picture’ – she adds a pebble through her own actions, but her own role is conceived as relatively small. Others, too, provide ‘pebbles,’ and unlike the short term losses and gains of specific campaigns, perhaps the big picture will not even be met while she is still involved. It may take the course of a lifetime or longer. These two conceptualizations of the ‘bigger picture’ and short-term campaigns afford a different role for notions of individual efficacy. The implication in “if I do this, it’s going to win” is a distinction between having the capacity to win a particular campaign (even if that result doesn’t always come about) and the capacity to create lasting change for the bigger picture. One can win a campaign and reach a particular goal, but the bigger picture is just that – it is larger than what any one person can achieve. In the short-term individual efficacy happens, but in the big picture one’s own role will not bring about the desired changes.

While most participants did not explain their reasons for participation in as much length as this participant, all of the reasons in this cluster were similar in that the beliefs were linked to notions of the good, and were similar in that they described abstract ideas about a better world that were larger than what could be accomplished through any one campaign. Moreover, they lacked the specificity that the ‘making a difference’ answers had.

‘Seeing people I like’ and ‘Recognition and respect’

The next two most common reasons emphasized different aspects of what was rewarding through direct contact with other participants. The answers in the ‘seeing people I like’ cluster emphasized a sense of camaraderie and group fun, while the ‘recognition and respect’ answers were similar in that they related to individual pride for work done. One participant described the pride he felt from his work, saying “people you didn’t even know will know who you are because you’ve done a good job. Which is pretty cool.” Like the making a difference reason, these answers related

to the day to day experiences that participants had, and in this case related to being amongst a social group who were like-minded and/or recognized one's own work.

The game and excitement of politics

The answers in this category were all similar in that they described the excitement of being involved in politics, following and being a part of what one participant described as knowing the “the who's in, who's out, who's up, who's down” within the Party and in any given electoral race. Another described liking the strategy and figuring out how to win aspects of it. All of these answers highlighted the strategic and gamesmanship aspects of politics and providing satisfaction, in much the same way that competing or participating in a sports match was exciting.

Self-respect, responsibility and duty

The answers in this category were rich in metaphor and all related to an internal sense of duty and drive to participate. One activist explained how he and others he worked with felt by saying, “we couldn't look in the mirror in the morning if we didn't feel as though we were doing something at least in our own little part of the world, and make this a better place.” This metaphor of looking in the mirror structures the way the participant thought about his own participation in an important way, explaining the self-referential nature of this particular sense of duty. Note too how this scope for action is framed, bringing the scale down to a level in his own life: doing something “in our own little part of the world,” where the participation actually take place. Making “this” a better place is more ambiguous – his little part of the world? The state of Massachusetts? The United States? The more ambiguous phrase seems to connect the little corner of the world with a larger (but undefined) better place. Not unlike the metaphor of pebbles in a bucket, this metaphor about looking in the mirror and a corner of the world expresses a larger concept about participation, and conveys meaning. Like the other answers in the group, this

metaphor conveys a sense of responsibility, of pride, of having to face up to oneself and an internalization of norms which made all the responses in this group similar.

Another respondent made the connection between the internalization of responsibility, saying, “if I don't vote, I feel like I'm the abandoning democracy, like what are we living in our country for? If I don't follow politics, and know what policy makers are doing, then I don't know who to support with my money or my votes or my time.” For him, the ideals of democracy were not hallowed concepts that lived only in books but ideas that were internalized, part of his own psyche and motivation, to the extent that *not* participating in the electoral process would lead him to feel as if he ‘abandoned’ democracy. Abandonment here implies that the participant perceives a relationship between his actions and the ideal democratic state, and that relationship must be maintained through active participation in the democratic process.

While some researchers like Conway and Feigert emphasized the altruistic nature of these reasons, what stands out from participants’ descriptions of this sense of duty was this sense of internalization. Other reasons, described below, emphasized the sense of being a member of a community, but these answers were all similar in focusing on a participants’ own sense of self, more like Verba et al’s selective civic gratifications.

Elect Democrats/Beat Republicans; Make good policy

Reasons in these clusters expressed the desire for triumph in partisan battle. They linked to ideas about specific election outcomes, wanting to throw the 2006 cohort of Republicans out of office, and secondarily to ideas about what Democrats could achieve if in power. In this sense, they were much more specific than the ‘belief in a better world’ reasons, but less immediate than making a difference.

A somewhat similar reason in scale of the goals was the desire to put better policy into place and a concern with the direction of the country. These answers varied in that they were less overtly partisan and tied to the outcomes of elections and more focused on policies. One respondent framed this importance in terms of ‘issues’:

Well, it really does come down to the fact that the issues make a difference... What I don't like is the fact that there are a lot of people that are still hurting, that still need help, and the government still has a role. I mean I respect the private sector economy, but there's a lot the government can do to make things better, and to make progress, from a progressive point of view. So for me it's really about the issues, and making an impact on the issues.

For him, the 'issues' were about real people who needed help, in the present tense, and the avenue for creating that help was through electoral politics.

Politics as an addiction

Reasons in this cluster were like the gratification that came from the excitement of politics, but distinct in that they were in some way 'indescribable' according to participants. They were admittedly 'not rational' reasons, and the metaphor of addiction came up in several instances. One participant joked that he stayed involved in politics because "I have a problem. I need a twelve-step program." In this sense, the reasons for involvement were emotional, even visceral, and sometimes described apologetically or jokingly, as if they were violating a sense of what they thought the answer should be. They were also unlike the satisfaction of working with other people in that they tended to be phrased in broader language. There was no specific event or moment of feeling like it was an addiction, but more of a general feeling about participation.

Connecting with and convincing voters

Back on the more concrete side of things, some participants also related the rewards of being involved to the one-on-one interactions they had with supporters or voters. As one respondent described it, this could be like a reunion with newfound friends:

Well on a day to day basis it [the rewards] would be, finding a supporter who is excited about a candidate, who'd known about them before, and they didn't know how to connect. So for example I decided to finish off [canvassing] a street that someone else had started, so I went and did that street and knocked on the door, and this woman opened the door, and said I'm so glad to see you! Those were the first words she said. I was wearing the candidate's campaign t-shirt. And it became clear that she was strongly

supporting the candidate, that she would volunteer, and no one had asked her.

Other respondents related the satisfaction to the process of having completed a task: “When you talk to a voter, and they say yes, I'm voting for her, that's extremely rewarding. It's is like, that is a vote that I just got. Check. Great. Awesome.” Still for others, it was the satisfaction of finding out other voters shared one's views: “Oh, when I hear people respond, when I hear that they like him and they like what he stands for, and I just feel really happy that they feel that way, and that's very rewarding for me.” Finally, some respondents emphasized the connection one could establish with voters while at the doorstep:

They're also willing to just open up their lives to you and share with you, and that you have to understand that for many people, that's a real gift of trust someone's giving you, and that you're now the trustee of that information, and how do you incorporate that information into either directly helping that person or taking that information and really incorporating it into the policy.

In all of these cases the rewards sprang directly from the act of knocking on doors, phone canvassing, and talking to voters and neighbours informally about politics or the election. The sense of reward, too, was tied to the difficulties that came from the very same activity: the relative infrequency when canvassing of hearing a positive response, the disappointment when others held in high regard did not share the same emotional attachment to a candidate or view on an election. When asked about the least rewarding aspects of the field work, respondents who reported the good feelings of finding other supporters were quick to point out this negative aspect of the work. She respondent laughed off the low returns that came from field work, saying “although I'm sure making phone calls is a great thing as far as volume is concerned, you talk to 200 answering machines a day, and it's like, what have I been doing all day? 200 answering machines and 5 people that hang up on you.”

All of these descriptions evoke the satisfaction, and disappointment, that come from trying to connect with others and identify a candidate's supporters.⁴⁶ They were also similar in that they usually expressed a sense of accomplishment (or, when negative a

⁴⁶ I will return to this issue again in chapter seven

lack thereof). So while part of it was a sense of community of like-minded individuals, it was also the satisfaction of completing tasks and getting things done.

Good for career

Finally, on the lower end of the scale in terms of frequency of answers, a few participants said that being involved in a campaign was good for their career. One participant said “I don't think it could hurt me professionally” [WH] - not exactly an overwhelming expression of desire for a job. Still, while not the most common reason, some participants did connect their participation to potential future career advancement and benefits.

Summary

In clustering all the different answers together, a few themes stand out. First, many of the clusters could be distinguished from one another according to how ‘concrete’ or ‘abstract’ they were – whether the participants related their reasons for participation to the rewards and gratifications of everyday practice, or whether they expressed such reasons in terms of more abstract ideas, such as hope in a better world or an internalized sense of duty. The most common reason was of the ‘concrete’ kind, in which participants talked about the gratification of making a difference through politics.

Second, there were indeed reasons in which it would be difficult to separate the notions of duty or purpose from notions of community – for instance, in the idea of working with people towards a commonly shared goal. Still other reasons were more specific, emphasizing either outcomes, like electing Democrats, or the camaraderie and fun of a sociable environment. Finally, some participants were specific in their emotional, ‘unexplainable’ reason for participating as something they just do, in some cases using the metaphor of addiction.

How, then, to put such reasons into categories? And what might the benefits be of doing so?

Creating categories out of reasons

In this section, I attempt to relate the reasons participants gave into coherent analytic categories. In building up from the reasons, my hope is that some of the previous problems in terms of reducing 'irreducible' notions can be avoided. Categories are good in that they are a common language which researchers may use to relate their findings to one another, and build towards a common body of knowledge. In this sense, while I find the specific categories previously used flawed in some ways, they are also extremely useful. Rather than throwing out categories entirely, it is better to try and build better categories.

My first step was to build on the distinction of concrete versus abstract reasons for participation, as this was a clear theme that came out from the reasons. This builds on the problem of conceptualizing efficacy and is similar to Verba et al's approach of looking at the circumstances in which efficacy may be claimed. Rather than seeing efficacy as either entirely a matter of perception or never applicable, I follow my participants (and Verba et al) in seeing influence as a factor which may be related to immediate concrete events and outcomes, but not as relevant for a discussion of more abstract meanings and reasons for participation. Second, I build on the incentives system framework, distinguishing solidary, purposive, and material reasons for involvement. However, I made one critical adjustment in my assignment of reasons to categories: those reasons that were 'abstract' were not fit into any of the categories. Often, as described below, those more abstract notions were also the ones that merged solidary and purposive ideas together, so that by following an abstract/concrete description it was possible to keep some ideas intact, and also group together similar reasons into solidary or purposive categories. I have labeled this category 'beliefs', and describe it in more detail below. Table 5.2 summarizes which reasons were in which categories. The percentages below each category reflect the proportion of all the answers that fell into that category.

Table 5.2: Reasons for participation

	All answers
(1) Material Reasons	
(1) Good for career	4
(1) May run for office	2
(1) Total	6
(1) Total as a proportion of all answers	4.2%
(2) Solidary Reasons	
(2) The game/excitement	10
(2) Seeing people I like	11
(2) Working with good people	3
(2) Being in a cmtty that shares my views	8
(2) Recognition/ respect	11
(2) Total	43
(2) Total as a proportion of all answers	30.0%
(3) Purposive Reasons	
(3) Elect Dems/ Beat Republicans	7
(3) Make my voice heard	1
(3) Make good policy/ concern w/ direction	7
(3) Be informed	3
(3) Work on something I can make a diff.	23
(3) Connecting/convincing voters	8
(3) Total	49
(3) Total as a proportion of all answers	34.3%
(4) Belief Reasons	
(4) Self-respect/responsibility/ duty	9
(4) Serving my community/ people like me	4
(4) Being with people who share my beliefs	5
(4) Good gov't/ Social justice	3
(4) Hope/ belief in better nation/world	12
(4) Faith in humanity	2
(4) Pass something on	3
(4) Politics is what I do/addiction	7
(4) Total	45
(4) Total as a proportion of all answers	31.5%
Totals answers (base for percentages)	143

Material

As a category, these were the least common reasons that participants cited, and this is similar to the results found of participants in American civic life, and party activists in the US, UK, and European parties. While material reasons did play a part in participants getting involved, as described in the last chapter, they were rarely gratifications or the reason why participants stayed involved in politics.

Solidary

Overall, 30% of all answers about rewards and meaning fell into the solidary category. In the fact that these were all concrete they were also very similar to Verba et al's concept of 'selective solidary benefits', because they were reasons where participants could describe with specific examples of why they were a benefit.

Purposive

These rewards were essentially goal-oriented rewards in that they all related to the achievement of outcomes. In this way, the data echoes the sentiment of efficacy that comes through in so many other empirical accounts, but departs from the idea of participation as un-influential and therefore irrational. The logic of putting several of the reasons in this category requires further elaboration. First, I put the 'Elect Democrats/Beat Republicans' reasons which were, as a cluster, very much related to the ends of getting Democrats into office. While there is a good deal of literature which relates partisan identity and voting to the concept of representation and social identity, the way in which participants phrased these reasons was very ends-oriented. It was not Democrats as people like themselves that served as a motivation in this group, but electing Democrats either as an end in itself or as a way of getting to better policy solutions that mattered.

Second, the reason ‘working on something I can make a difference on’ is, as discussed, very concrete and so is put in the purposive, ends-related category. As all of the reasons in this category related to very specific stories of getting tasks done, or the sense of accomplishment from actually doing things, they are all in the purposive category. With the exception of Finkel and Opp’s instrumental public goods notion, outcomes have consistently been treated in previous studies as non-procedural – that is, those rewards that can be found from collective outcomes are selective and psychic, the feeling of having contributed. At no point is it implied in the categorization that the outcomes are real. ‘Concrete procedural’ is incompatible with a traditional rational choice or incentives system conception because ends are never directly related to individual action, but here, on the other hand, the notion of ‘concrete’ is very similar to the traditional ‘procedural’ or ‘selective’ in that it actually comes from doing participation - which includes accomplishing things.

Third, while the title ‘connecting with/convincing voters’ may sound like a solidary, community building reason, on closer inspection these descriptions all related to the satisfaction of job completion, or the satisfaction of saying ‘check’ after identifying a voter. Conversely, the dissatisfaction that some participants felt was unrewarding was in not being able to identify more voters. So it was about getting things done.

The way in which I’ve thus constructed this category departs from the traditional understanding of ‘purposive’ reasons as researched before in that it is very clear that participants do appear to have a sense of their own effectiveness that is based in reality – linked to specific stories and events, activities they have undertaken and goals accomplished.

Beliefs

The reasons in this category are all similar in that they express the importance of a deeply held belief, an emotionally important concept, or a purpose that goes beyond the confines of partisan concerns and electoral contests. And although the listed reasons here do relate to the electoral ends and specific, here-and-now purposes of campaigns and elections, to reduce these reasons to partisan aims would be to lose

their essential meaning. Whether in the form of a sense of duty and responsibility, or a hope for a better nation, or service to the community, in each of these reasons below respondents frequently made reference to a ‘higher calling’ or ‘deeper level.’ For this reason, I have not included them in the purposive category, in order to highlight the difference between motivations relating to discrete goals and purposes, and the deeply held beliefs which animate action. While these beliefs spur action, these motivations cannot be met or fulfilled in the same way as the purposive reasons, because these reasons are all beliefs – they cannot be ‘met,’ but rather serve as a motivational guide for how and why to act in life.

These reasons are also separable from the previous purposive and beliefs categories in that they have inseparably social and ideational concepts. For instance, the reason of ‘serving my community’ that was expressed by several participants was not specifically goal-oriented, like those in the purposive category, but nor was it entirely about receiving the benefits of being among like-minded people. Rather, it was essentially altruistic in that it was about benefitting others, but the notion of community was about serving one’s own community that it was a part of. In this sense, the distance between self- and other that seems so far away in rational choice theory is not so distant here. It also is a notion that requires a conception of people as inherently social, as participants who are part of a specific context and community. In these answers, the concept of community was actually fairly concrete – it was a participant’s *own* community that he or she was a part of – that they were helping.

In some respects ‘beliefs’ are very similar to ‘ideological’ reasons if one takes ideology to refer to a broad worldview. However, I avoid using the term in order to distinguish ‘beliefs’ from the way in which ‘ideology’ is often used in the narrow sense, relating only to partisan conceptions of the good. While the beliefs expressed here are clearly about visions of the good, they are broader than any one notion articulated within a political sphere and often, as in the case of ‘serving my community,’ have a distinctly non-partisan ring to them. Thus ‘beliefs’ both avoids the confusion of equating these reasons with the narrowly focused epithet of extreme partisanship and also emphasizes that they are grounded in and relate to a broader notion of society and community.

Application: the 'civic duty' and 'party attachment' problems

Having outlined a different way of conceptualizing categories and how they relate to one another, how does this framework compare to those already in use when it comes to the ideas of civic duty and party attachment? In both cases, the notions of 'party attachment' and 'civic duty' are not shown in exactly the same form in the data here because they are broken down into different components. For instance, doing one's duty, serving their community, and helping to make a difference could all be interpreted as answers that relate to civic duty; indeed, the utility of seeing concrete gratifications as nested in concepts like service to one's community is that it helps to show how these ideas are intact, even when they are broken down into specific elements. Similarly, the gains of spending time with like-minded people (a solidary reason, here), of elected Democrats (a purposive reason) and the hope and belief that good government (Democratic government) can all create a better nation could all be interpreted as being 'party attachment' reasons. The utility of distinguishing the different kinds of reasons here and of their relation to one another is that it provides for a richer account of complex notions like 'civic duty' and how they are manifested in several different kinds of pleasures from actually doing work, and how the notion of civic duty provides meaning for participants in understanding their work. In sum, then, I see the way in which reasons are separated into categories here as a compatible improvement on the incentives system theory, utilizing the best aspects of it whilst hammering out some of the shortcomings.

Role Differences

In this section I review what differences there are between the volunteer and organizer roles. Because of the small number of informal advisors and the similarity between their answers and those in the organizer roles, I group those two together here.⁴⁷ There appear to be group differences at both the individual reason level and

⁴⁷ As a shorthand, the use of 'organizers' for the rest of the chapter should read as 'organizers and informal advisors'

the category of reasons level. These differences and similarities are important because, as we shall see in the chapter seven, the concept of different motivations for professionals and amateurs is part of separates participants in each role. Having a sense of what the differences are in the data here will help for the argument in chapter seven. Table 5.4 summarizes which reasons were more common for which groups.

Table 5.3: Most common in rewards for participation by volunteer or organizer roles

Reason	Canvassers	Organizers and Informal Advisors
Solidary	Being in a community that shares my views	The game/excitement of it
		Working with good people
		Respect/Recognition
		Connecting with/convincing voters
Purposive		Work on something I can make difference
Belief	Serving my community/people	Being with people who share my beliefs
	Self-respect/responsibility/duty	Good government/Social justice
	Hope/belief in a better	
	Faith in humanity	

The difference between the volunteer and organizer groups occurs at two levels. One, the individual reasons, displayed above, given by the two groups are different, so that the fun and excitement of the campaign, recognition and respect, the reward of connecting with individuals and voters is much more common for organizers than it is for canvassers. Taken on its own, the gratifications that come from connecting with voters would seem to be a mismatch with the organizer category, in that such door to door work is more within the remit of canvassers. However, the next reason for the organizers, the gratifications that come from working on something in which they can make a difference, may provide the explanation. As discussed in chapter three, organizers, especially those who are organizing a larger district, like a town, do often go door to door when there are not enough volunteers to do the work. Moreover, the ‘organizers’ category includes not only those who are presently working as organizers, but those who were ever working as organizers, so that some in the

organizer category have also had experience just as a volunteer in present or previous campaigns.

The key difference is that the organizers not only find more rewards and reasons coming from being able to connect and convince voters and supporters, but a greater sense of efficacy coming from it. If one has a greater sense of being able to make a difference, that would in turn relate to the sense of actually being able to do the convincing. In the beliefs category, good government, while not one of the most common reasons, came from organizers, and not volunteers. The sense of duty and the twin ideas of belief in a better world and a global faith in humanity came much more from volunteers. Table 4.5 shows the distribution of answers by group.

Table 5.4: Reason distribution by group

	Volunteer	Organizers/adv
	All	All
Material	5.0 %	3.6 %
Solidary	30.0 %	39.8 %
Purposive	23.3 %	32.5 %
Belief	41.6 %	24.1 %
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The distributions appear to be different largely due to the extent to which volunteers gave reasons in the belief category to a much greater extent, proportionately, than the organizers did, and to the extent that organizers gave ‘making a difference’ as a reason to a much greater extent. My interpretation of this is that the organizers gave answers that were much more concrete, goal oriented and related to getting things done. Although the organizers did not fail entirely to give answers in the belief category, it was as if the organizers did not place the work they were doing within a broader framework of beliefs and sense of the good life to the same extent that volunteers did.

I can think of two possible explanations for this. One, organizers were much more likely to see what they were doing in very concrete terms of getting things done, doing voter IDs, and getting work done – thus the broader meaning of the work

linked very closely to the notion of getting it done. This was a theme that came through in the previous chapter too, where the focus on being organized, getting voter IDs completed, being task specific and efficient were clearly associated to a greater extent with the organizers. Given the greater opportunity to have more control over, say, voter turnout (by getting all their work done), this became of greater importance to the organizers than the volunteers. Lacking such opportunities as the organizers, the volunteers instead relied on shared beliefs about the good life to find meaning in their work, beliefs that were previously held but encouraged in connection with the work by group leaders. Were volunteers given the same opportunities and tasks of the organizers, one would see the same distribution of answers for each group, so that volunteers would report much making a difference in what they were doing as frequently as the organizers.

The alternative explanation is that the concept of beliefs as widely shared meanings attends only to the volunteers, who in a sense have a different organizational culture from the organizers. In this instance, the concept of beliefs as having important motivational force still holds true, but it only applies to a smaller group of people – the volunteers – within the Democratic Party campaigning organizations than originally theorized.

My hunch is that the answer lies in between the two alternatives. The analysis in the last two chapters shows largely the same pattern in that there are many things shared between the two groups, and in addition some things that are exclusive to the organizers. In this sense, there is a strong case for viewing organizers as having a sub-culture which includes different learning, experiences, and habits of thinking that is different and exclusive from the volunteers. The reason why I label it a ‘sub’ culture and not two separate cultures is because the same cannot be said of the volunteers, that they have learning, experiences, and habits of thinking that are exclusive to only their group, and not shared with the organizers. In terms of the things to know and things to learn, there were many things shared by both groups – friendliness and outgoing, and the importance of community knowledge. But there were some issues and knowledge which pertained only to the organizers, in terms of organization skills, a methodical approach, a focus on efficiency and attention to

detail. In this chapter, almost all of the reasons for participation are shared, and the same patterns of correlating beliefs with the question on meaning indicate that both groups draw on beliefs in the same way as an explanation. However, the organizers are much more likely to cite their ability to get things done and the actual getting things done at the doorstep as reasons for their involvement – a reason that is almost exclusive to the organizers group. So again, while there is much that is shared, a few things are exclusive to the organizers, and nothing is exclusive to the volunteers. In sum, while much is shared, not everything is.

Discussion

In this chapter, I problematized the way in which motives for participation tend to be treated in political science literature. Drawing on rational choice theories and incentive system models that tend to under-theorize the role and importance of culture as a concept and component related to motivations, I showed how dealing with reasons that link ideational and community notions have shown up the conceptual limitations of this framework. I then presented data from the research interviews, using a grounded theory approach to test the concepts used in the incentive systems framework, the extent to which ‘motives’ as a concept is stretched beyond its useful limits, and what, if any differences can be found between the volunteer and organizer/informal advisory role groups.

Through the process of reconstructing incentive system categories, it is clear that some reasons that participants give for their participation do not easily fit into the material, solidary, or purposive categories. When participants talked about service to their community, or their belief in making the world a better place, they combined notions of community and belonging with ideational aspirations for what the good life is, placing their work within the broader context of visions of a good life. In this sense, these concepts were different from the very concrete and immediate reasons which constituted the solidary and purposive categories. While previous studies have been inclined to try and separate these ideas into their community oriented and ideational benefits, I argue that, just as cultural components such as organizational

learning are more than the sum of their parts, so too are culturally-grounded beliefs which have motivational force translated into less than their sum when divided into parts. By keeping such concepts intact and extending the study of motivation to include such more-than-individually-based-ideas as cultural beliefs, incentives models can be used much more effectively to explain and understand what animates political participation.

Further, this separation between abstract notions of the good and aspirational understandings of participation, on the one hand, with concrete, task-related gratifications and meaning on the other, also showed how participants could think of their work as actually making a difference in the present, which was different and separate from the more abstract notions of making the world better. By asking two different kinds of questions in the interview, one which focused on day to day gratifications and one which asked about what participation meant at the end of the day, and then comparing which reasons were more common for each answer, I further showed that the beliefs reasons were discussed in response to the meaning question much more frequently, and the solidary reasons were much more prevalent as a gratification in terms of the day to day work. This difference is important because it shows how different motives do different work – solidary gratifications are important in terms of feeling like work is fulfilling on a day to day basis, but these solidary reasons are conceptually different than the beliefs which animate work and help participants to understand and make meaning out of their participation. In this sense, they are non-interchangeable.

Why have beliefs never been incorporated into accounts of participation before? First, I believe that recognizing these reasons as a category have been masked by the way in which influence has been framed in rational choice theory, so that reasons which are related to specific activities get mixed up with more abstract beliefs about the way the world should be. This theoretically driven tendency to view participation as ineffectual has rendered each category of reason less understandable, because it misses both the ways in which participants think in very concrete terms about outcomes and influence, and the broader ways in which participation is tied to notions of the good life that extend beyond the immediate world of politics and

policymaking. The assumption in rational choice that action is ineffectual misses how participants learn to be rational in their practice in the sense of connecting their own work and input with the satisfaction of jobs done. The problem with efficacy, traditionally construed, is that it is both too literally oriented and not literal enough.

Second, the tendency to separate solidary from purposive ideas from one another similarly mistakes the reasons in the belief category as equal to all its pieces. Just as organizational learning, in the last chapter, is more than its parts, so too is something valuable and meaningful for understanding participation lost when ideas of making one's community better are separated into their ideational and social components. By leaving such ideas intact, we can see how notions of community and of the good life are intricately tied into one another.

Finally, I believe that the importance of beliefs have been difficult to grasp because they are in some way essentially social, intersubjectively created, shared, and cultural, as Yee, Mansbridge, and other critics have acknowledged – and thus somewhat incompatible with a purely traditional rational choice or behavioral framework. The tendency in research drawing on rational choice theory on individuals as their own entities, taken out of context and away from their setting means that those aspects of meaning which are important to participation cannot be understood by pulling individuals apart from one another, so that what is lost is that which is created in between, collectively and intersubjectively.

By acknowledging the beliefs here as being separate from the immediate concrete goals of trying to get things done and win elections, there is also room for understanding the variety of beliefs that may be expressed by participants across different participatory contexts and settings. In other words, the beliefs expressed by participants here may not be universal in the sense that partisans from other parties or parts of the country will express the same vision of the good and beliefs about the way the world must be – just as participants of different parties may ascribe to different ideologies in the broadest sense of the term. One of the benefits of separating out beliefs from purposive reasons for participation is that it creates a categorical/analytical space for articulating the intersubjectively created and shared ideas which animate participation that are specific to one context and group of

people, while also making the fact of those beliefs comparative across different groups. Republican participants, for instance, might formulate their idea of how the world should be in ways that are substantially different from the emphasis on community and commonality here – or, perhaps, perceive ‘community’ along different dimensions. Separating purposive reasons from beliefs thus *increases* the ability to compare reasons for participation across different groups.

The ideas expressed in this category can be understood as cultural beliefs in ways that theoretically informed accounts developed that other aspects of the literature predict. First, the use of metaphor in the belief reasons is important because metaphors share stored meanings and ways of understanding the world. Cultural values, Lakoff and Johnson argued, are stored, communicated, and made coherent through metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1983: 22). Schein was explicit about the role of metaphor in communicating complex meanings. They are the “habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms,” or “the shared cognitive frames that guide the perceptions, thought, and language used by the members of a group” (Shafritz and Ott 2001: 372). These are the collective ideas that guide participants understanding of what they are doing, and provide a source of meaning. That, as Kilmann reminds us, is what culture does – it “provides meaning” (Shafritz and Ott 2001: 361), and more generally, that cultures are shared systems of meaning.

Articulating beliefs as separate from purposive reasons also opens up understanding how the two relate to one another. Previously, Mansbridge and others have theorized that self-interest can ‘nest’ in altruism, and the same appears to be true for the relationship between purposive reasons and beliefs. Her (and others’) focus was on how self-interest could provide cover for doing altruistic behavior, and thus provide a way of tricking or talking oneself into doing good things, and showed how cooperation could only happen under specific circumstances (Mansbridge 1995: 143). Put simply, one can see clear relationships between the concrete reasons that participants list as gratifications and the more abstract beliefs and meanings in participation. When individuals found the day to day campaigning exciting, this was a concrete manifestation of the idea that politics was somehow addictive or like a drug. The idea of excitement and a ‘buzz’ from politics on a daily level translated

into the broader metaphor of ‘addiction’. Similarly, one can find that the specific, concrete gratifications such as spending time with people that one likes is nested in the sense of being part of a broader, more abstract ‘community’ of people who all share the same ideas and beliefs and work towards them. Purposive gratifications and beliefs are still several logical steps away from one another, but they are still related. In this sense, the purposive reasons ‘nest’ in beliefs. Moreover, as we shall see in the chapter seven, the group norm of being productive and efficacy, especially as emphasized by group leaders, helps to establish this ‘nesting’ by emphasizing the links between concrete action and broader belief systems.

Having separated the purposive and beliefs reasons, one important theme that came through in the analysis is the notion of efficacy and ability to influence and make a difference. While rational choice model users are theoretically inclined to dismiss such claims as irrational, in this chapter, again, the emphasis that organizers placed on working to make a difference, and the language they used to discuss such gratifications in very concrete terms. It may not be rational in the traditional sense of weighing a cost versus the benefits, but it is rational in a different way: a satisfaction with making a difference that comes through long hours of (learned) practice. This sense of efficacy merits further investigation rather than dismissal. It implies that a solely instrumental view of participation tells only part of the story. In addition to missing beliefs, it misses the ways in which people learn how to be rational and strategic in their own practice.

The framework of material, solidary, purposive and beliefs gratifications outlined in this chapter modifies the traditional incentive framework so that those dimensions of motivation and making participation meaningful are not squeezed into a purely instrumental equation, but rather acknowledged and added to a different kind of ‘rational calculus’ of trying to achieve certain ends. By not conflating action aimed at achieving ends in the short term with broader belief systems about the way the world should be we can recognize the important role that social life and reasons created in the intersubjective interactions of participants has in animating political participation.

Finally, I highlighted some important differences in the reasons volunteers and organizers gave for their participation. Organizers much more frequently cited

gamesmanship, convincing voters, working on something they can make a difference, and notions of good government or social justice as reasons for their participation, while volunteers cited being in a community of like-minded people, notions of service to one's community and belief in a better world more frequently. And while the distribution of the categories for day to day gratifications were overall very similar for the two groups, volunteers cited reasons in the belief category much more often when responding to the question about meaning, when compared to their volunteer counterparts. Considering several different explanations for why this may be, I suggest that organizers are more likely to think about work in much more concrete terms of getting tasks done and having an impact, reflecting both a greater sense of one's own efficacy and a more short-term, goal orientation in thinking about their work. While these reasons are exclusive to the organizers, the beliefs – while more prevalent for volunteers – were not exclusive to that group, suggesting that organizers' experiences, learning, socialization, and beliefs tends towards a kind of sub-culture within the Democratic Party campaigning community. Thus while there is much – in terms of practices, learning, experiences, and beliefs – that binds organizers and volunteers together, organizers also have unique experiences which provide a separate sub-culture of knowledge, learning, and mental models that are exclusive to those who have organized.

Having described and analyzed the process of joining a grassroots political campaign, learning how to participate well, become a member of community and the motives and meanings which individuals find in participation, in the next chapter I turn to the question of what participation produces.

Chapter 6: Representation and Linkage

Thus far in this thesis I have focused on the community of practitioners constituting the grassroots campaigning organizations, the norms, learning, and relations between those participants, and the meanings they find in their own participation. In this chapter I focus on the productivity of such participation. At the end of the day, what does all this participation produce?

Primarily, of course, it is intended to produce votes, and a sizeable body of research – as well as participants’ own experiences – serves as testimony to this outcome. But this chapter focuses on what else may be produced through participation. In chapter four, I noted that participants reported as ‘representing’ as one of the abilities needed to do field work well, and it is this concept that I focus on. Canvassing and participation at the organizational margins serves to link a campaign to voters and communities, and in order to do this participants provide *endorsements* of a candidate to their own social network and broader community, they serve as the physical and immediate *representative* of a candidate or campaign in civic and political realms, and they *translate* campaign messages from abstract promises into concrete entities with implications for real people. According to participants, doing all of this happens because of, and requires, an ability to connect or bond with voters and fellow citizens. In this sense, this boundary work of translating, representing, and endorsing engages voters and campaign participants (including, in some cases, the candidates themselves) in the co-production of a thick linkage between elites and citizens. Rather than the exchange-based mechanisms which are used to conceptualize party linkage, I argue that these grassroots campaigning interactions between canvassers and citizens is aimed at producing a sense of bonding, responsibility, and trust which cannot be reduced to a quid pro quo relationship of policy influence in exchange for votes. As such, grassroots campaigning participation has important implications for the normative concerns with the uncoupling, in which citizens feel unbound from the decisions of political elites made in inaccessible policy and political networks.

I start this chapter by discussing the concept of linkage as usually applied to party politics, highlighting the way it is conceptualized as an exchange in rational choice models and the trouble with conceptualizing party activists only as more active voters with respect to linkage. I then follow the concept of linkage and why it has not been as well developed in the literature on American parties and campaigns. Crucially, neither the research on parties and linkage, nor the literature on campaigns addresses issues of civic decline beyond voter turnout, nor does it address a role for participants other than something akin to voters. This appears to be a missed opportunity to address one of the problems of civic decline outlined by Henrik Bang as the ‘uncoupling’ between elites and citizens. I then outline an alternative notion of ‘thick linkage’ which redefines campaign participants as boundary workers who translate between elites and non-elites. I finish the literature discussion section by tying this to the problem of decoupling in the contemporary era. I then discuss how participants go about doing field work in terms of making endorsements, representing, and translating between campaign elites and citizens, how this produces credibility, and trust, and ‘thick’ linkage.

Linkage and party participation

That political parties enable linkage between the state and society or between citizens and elites is one of the core tenets of the theory and research regarding parties. Some of the literature on parties thus focuses on how linkage has failed (Lawson 1988), declined (Katz 1990), or defied our expectations (Scarrow 1996). Often, attempts at theorizing this relationship highlight what Rosenau terms the “penetration” of the state by citizens, via parties (Rosenau 1969). In this view, the party function of linkage is often focused on how citizens may capture the levers of power in the state, and the way in which linkage happens ‘up’ from citizen *to* state or from citizen *to* elites. For instance, of Lawson’s five kinds of linkage, four are focused on the ways in which citizens influence elites and state organs, rather than the other way around⁴⁸ (Lawson 1988).

⁴⁸ The fifth kind of linkage is when office holders seek to control citizens through party agencies, and is mainly drawn from work on Eastern bloc communist parties.

Katz succinctly defines linkage as “implying that the party as an organization provides a set of opportunities for citizens actively to influence public decisions, and from the other side provides elites with channels of communication to the citizenry” (Katz 1997: 173). In his own research on this issue, Katz (1990) uses a loose rational choice theory approach to ask about whether parties still need members, and members need parties in order to reach their rationally-decided upon goals (influence on policy for members, communicating with the electorate and winning elections for party leaders). His basic answer, using data from western European states was essentially, no. Members could go to other organizations for influence on policy (notably, burgeoning social movements and interest groups) and party elites had increasingly turned to mass media for their communication needs. The result of this rational calculus was that linkage function of parties, as fulfilled via party members and activists, was left only as a ‘vestigial’ function.

Reflecting back on that article in 1997, Katz conceded that he underestimated the extent to which parties would value members for their legitimating function, a relationship that Susan Scarrow (1996) highlighted with her research on German and British political parties. The ability for party members to serve as “ambassadors to the community” (1996: 43) could not be replaced by communication through other means. Clark (2004) similarly points to the importance of local party organizations in the Western European context as increasing party legitimacy by demonstrating broad-based appeal in society. Importantly, even though Katz came to a different conclusion (initially) than Scarrow and Clark about the importance of linkage to party elites, they share a common conceptualization of linkage as essentially an exchange between voters and elites: you make the policies that are in my interests and I will give you my support, the party activists/voters say. Serve as my ‘ambassador’ to voters in your community and I will reward you with preferred policy outcomes, social gratifications, and the sense of a job well done, the party leaders reply. By conceptualizing participation as a form of exchange, the relationship between elites and citizens hinges on outcomes, policies, and voting behavior. This ‘thin’ notion of linkage, as I will call it, provides a minimalist interpretation of the relationship between elites and citizens.

Importantly, in this conceptualization of linkage participants are either conceptualized as voters or as part of the party organization, but not as occupying a qualitatively separate role in the linkage relationship. According to Katz, Scarrow, and Clark participants act like part of the party, communicating messages and delivering party appeals. The metaphor of being an ambassador is demonstrative, conveying the sense that participants are not autonomous from a party message, just empty vessels which convey intact messages. Such conceptions leave little room to imagine any other ways in which participants act, what additional functions they may serve, and therefore what additional questions we may ask about participation.

On the other hand, participants are voters by another name and another means: their concerns are largely about policy outcomes and elite actions. Participants are state-oriented and outcome oriented, they think in the same way and are concerned with the same things as voters. They are state oriented like voters, attempting to influence policy choices. Of course, one could argue, many authors have pointed out how political and civic activists are *different* from non-participants in that they tend to have different policy preferences than non-participants, either because they are better off and more resourceful in general or because they are more extreme in their views, which causes the authors to question whether more participation by these citizens leads to skewed signals about what policy priorities should be (e.g., Aldrich 1995; Fiorina 2004; May 1973; Verba Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

In terms of relating these conceptions to the present case study both Katz's and Scarrow's research findings provide a more useful framework for conceptualizing linkage with respect to participation compared to the literature on American parties because of the separation often made between parties and campaigning in the American literature, so that questions regarding linkage are not connected with the literature on campaigning (and especially field work).

For instance, in constructing her argument about the role of party members as ambassadors, Scarrow focuses on party campaigning activities. The British and German parties she studies are different from their American counterparts in that the German and British parties do have formal, card-carrying members, and that campaigning organizations and party organizations are not traditionally as distinct as

the American ones. In comparison, the research which deals with campaign field work in the US does, like the literature on campaigning in general, deal almost exclusively with the question of effects. Since the dominant notion that campaigns had relatively little effects on outcomes which used to be the conventional wisdom has faded to some degree (Shaw 2006), much more energy has been invested into looking at what kinds of effects campaigning can have on outcomes and under what circumstances. By now, a healthy and growing body of research has established that various field tactics can and do raise levels of voter turnout (Arceneaux 2007; Gerber and Green 2000, 2001; Gerber, Green and Schachar 2003; Gimpel et al 2007 Nickerson 2005, 2006. 2007; Nickerson et al 2006). Research focuses on the effects of different tactics on turnout, with door-to-door contact having the largest effects compared to telephone, media, and direct mail appeals (Brox and Shaw 2006).

While these studies are primarily concerned with turnout, some do connect turnout with problems of civic engagement and decline. As one group of authors sums it up, “our study reinforces the importance of campaigns as instruments of democracy. On the one hand, our results point to short-term gains in the socioeconomic diversity of battleground voters. In the long term, these efforts may result in an electorate that is reliably diverse across election cycles” (Gimpel et al 2007: 796). Campaigns are good for a healthy democracy because more people, and more socio-economic diverse people, go out and vote as a result of higher campaign contacts in a presidential election. Clark points towards local party activities as addressing the problems of political apathy, but only mentions increased vote share and turnout as positive result of local campaigning (Clark 2004: 41). Nickerson (2006: 270) also makes the case that his research on the effectiveness of paid versus volunteer phone banks has important implications for civic engagement, but largely undermines that argument through a research design which asks paid phone banks to act like volunteer ones and vice versa, thus making the primary comparison one of quality of phone calls rather than organization type. Overall, these concerns about anything other than campaigning effects, in the literature on field work⁴⁹, are treated as secondary rather than primary concerns and are largely made on the basis of research

⁴⁹ Research on other campaign topics, such as finance and media affects, includes more research regarding normative questions. See Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), Arceneaux (2006), Banducci and Carp (2003), and Coleman and Manna (2000) among others.

designed to address turnout effects questions. They also differ from their European counterparts in the lack of enquiry regarding linkage and parties.

To sum up, then, research on parties and linkage has, in the European cases, focused on linkage as an exchange relationship between elites and party members and/or voters, where non-elites interact in order to achieve policy influence and elites attempt to communicate with voters in order to get re-elected. This exchange mechanism conception thus limits the concept of linkage to a minimalist or 'thin' form, focusing on only the instrumental aspects of such relationships. Participants in campaigns and parties matter to 'thin' linkage to the extent that they may increase voter participation, thereby helping parties to fulfill their essential aggregative and communicative functions (i.e., expressing by way of votes which policies citizens would like to see enacted).

This instrumental conception also frames most studies of political participation to the extent that participants are largely conceived as voters who go the extra mile (hour, dollar) to achieve influence on elites. While the concerns expressed are often about outsized influence, the relationship is essentially the same as in the policy promises exchanged for votes, as above. While this is no doubt a critical component of participation, it is necessarily narrow and reflects a restricted set of questions which can be addressed regarding the normative implications of participation.

Linkage and the problem of uncoupling

Building on Henrik Bang's work, I argue that the one of the more critical issues today is the problem of uncoupling, where the links between citizens and political authorities have become frayed. Bang describes uncoupling as deriving from the fact that "political authorities cannot make and implement authoritative decisions for a society unless laypeople accept them and recognize themselves as bounded by them" (Bang 2004: 4). Uncoupling is the process whereby citizens are "in growing numbers excluded from partaking, even indirectly, in the constitution of effective politics and policy" within formal political arenas, such as parliaments (Bang 2004: 6). In this formulation, the problem is that citizens are no longer part of political processes, and

therefore have no affinity or trust for the political authorities who make decisions on their behalf.

Linkage should have obvious relevance for uncoupling, in that if the problem is basically that citizens are no longer “bounded” by or to political authorities and the decisions they implement because they are excluded from relevant political processes, then the linkage function of parties should be able to address the bond between citizens and elites and the issue of exclusion. Focused as it is on exchange mechanisms, the ‘thin’ notion of linkage leaves the issues of trust and acceptance of political elites un-examined.

I argue that participating in campaigns crucially addresses these concerns. While the primary goal of field work is, for organizers and volunteers alike, getting votes and winning elections, it has the potential for knock-on effects in terms of producing a form of ‘thick’ linkage. By thick linkage, I mean that field work participants, in the act of asking voters to support their candidate, do more than just ask for votes; they bind themselves and commit themselves to candidates beyond a mere ‘ask’ for policy outcomes. Likewise, some candidates and senior-level organizers recognize the extent to which the practice of field work relies on and produces a bond of trust between participant and voter. Rather than an exchange of desires and needs, this interaction at the organizational margins produces a relationship between participant and voter that engages notions of trust, bonding, and the act of being a co-producer of whatever outcome candidates are pitching. It goes beyond the abstract ‘legitimacy’ that Clark discusses, which is based on the perception of broad-based social support for a party, because it is the support of specific members of society – friends, neighbors, trusted acquaintances – which is communicated to voters. It is in this sense participation can be and is productive of normative ends for democracy.

I distinguish thick linkage from Putnam’s (1995) much more well-known notion of social capital, which focuses on the bonds forged between citizens and between civic and political realms. Here I am focused on the linkage between citizens and actual political elites, and on the ways in which participants are citizens who bind themselves to the fate and reputation of elites, bringing the goals and ideas of those elites (candidates) to the doors of other citizens. Rather than Putnam’s static

categories of ‘civic’ and ‘political,’ ‘elite’ and ‘citizen,’ I highlight the productive work of participants in the boundaries and margins between these categories, blurring the distinctions through the act of representing, translating, and endorsing. Thus thick linkage is distinct in both the way it addresses categories of people and in which relationships it addresses.

Thick linkage is, closer to Durkheim’s organic notions of solidarity (1893), which Granovetter uses to build the concepts of ‘strong ties’ and ‘weak ties.’ Strong ties, for him, are typified by shared similarities and proximity between individuals, and weak ties are ties those between people with less in common and less direct contact (Granovetter 1973). However, unlike Granovetter’s notion and Durkheim’s idea of organic solidarity as exclusively socially focused, ‘thick linkage’ is explicitly focused on relations with elites. It may rely on pre-existing ties between citizens, but to the extent that it also produces a further layer of binding between actors on the campaign trail, it goes beyond any pre-existing social relations.

Rahn, Brehm and Carson (1999) go further in relating ‘trust’ to elections, but take a slightly different approach to the situation. Firstly, their focus is on trust is connected to *elections*, which they refer to as ‘national institutions,’ rather than campaigns per se. And perhaps more importantly, in exploring both generalized trust and political trust they conduct the entire discussion – including addressing the role of political parties in contacting citizens and urging them to vote – without ever bringing in the concept of linkage. While the notion of trust as they use it is somewhat similar to the idea of linkage in that thick linkage includes a focus on trust, unlike Rahn, Brehm and Carson I build the concept within existing frameworks for looking at elites in party politics.

In the next section I explore how participants act out and provide endorsements or guidance for their network of friends, family and co-workers, how they see themselves as representatives, and the translating work that they do. I then discuss how this is a form of productive work engaging trust.

Endorsements

On the Monday morning after the state Democratic Party convention, Joe organized a visibility for his gubernatorial candidate at the local public transportation hub. We all assembled to hold signs and wave at drivers during rush hour, or hand out flyers to passers-by boarding the trains and buses. The logic, according to Joe, was that the convention results (which were relatively favorable for his candidate) would be on the morning news, and so even though it was only June, the chances were people would be hearing something about the convention or political news whilst on their way into work.

As we stood around, several passersby knew one of the group, getting a hello or even a quick conversation. A conversation ensued between Joe and an old friend and an old friend of his, who asked how the convention had gone. Joe talked up his candidate's performance at the convention, and she seemed to be absorbing Joe's interpretations of the events. As I sidled up to the conversation, Joe introduced Nancy, who responded by remarking that since she was no longer involved (since the days a decade ago when she and Joe both participated in local politics), Joe was "our moral compass." In other words, the decisions he made guided the choices she should make.

While not all participants consider themselves a "moral compass" in the same way, the use of dear friend cards by campaigns involves essentially the same function of communicating one's vote choice to others in one's social network. Holding signs, sending out dear friend cards, and talking about the election to one's friends and neighbors did more than just convey the campaign message. In these cases, it mattered that the volunteers (more than often than organizers) already knew the people who they were contacting through dear friend cards, canvassing, hosting coffee parties and doing visibilities for a candidate. These activities conveyed something about the messenger as well and that they were *endorsing* the candidate they were out working for.

Another common campaign tool was the use of lawn signs. Recall that back in chapter four one organizer considered these a 'waste of time,' compared to voter identification activities. However, another participant, our volunteer Dave, saw the

benefit of lawns signs, explaining that they were important because “people notice that.” I asked what it was people noticed – the number, or who put them up, or what – and he elaborated

it's a real commitment, it's letting their neighbors know who they support, and usually you know if that sign is on that person's lawn, you know that probably their extended - their whole family might be supporting that candidate too and that - and you know people in [this city], they'll look at different locations, and not just [the city] but in the area, and they'll look at someone's house and say oh they're supporting so and so, that might mean something to a neighbor, you know?

For Dave, putting a lawn sign up was significant because it was communicating to neighbors who their vote choice was for, and it “might mean” something to a neighbor. These lawn signs act as a kind of endorsement, using the endorser – whoever has a sign on their lawn – as a way of telling something about the candidate.

In another lawn sign case, I drove a house mate with a broken leg to vote before the primaries, and before we went in the voting booth, she asked me to go through the down ticket races for who I was voting for so she would know who to vote for. Other than the gubernatorial candidates, she had either not heard of them or not made her mind up. When we got out of the voting booth, she commented that we hadn't discussed the very last race on the ticket, for registry of deeds. In the end, she voted for the candidate that had lawn signs up in our neighbor's yard, reasoning that they were smart and lawyers so the candidate couldn't be all that bad. In this example, I was the opinion leader (not unlike Joe as the ‘moral compass’) and our neighbor's lawn sign conferred approval on a candidate where no other information was known about them.

While the accounts of this kind of endorsement act are between individuals with direct, pre-existing ties, they did not necessarily have to be close or personal ties. My flatmate, for instance, knew almost nothing of our neighbors other than what was stated – they were lawyers. But the fact that they lived across the street and so were in some way ‘known’ was good enough. Similarly, one participant explained the use of starting out phone scripts or leaving message with “hi, I'm your neighbor,” saying “I think it tells people that someone else in your neighborhood, who you might or might not know, can utter this person's [the candidate's] name without contempt.

That there's some kind of approval, or there's some kind of collective sense, that other people near you are thinking positively about someone". And recall Maggie, introduced in chapter four, who canvassed her neighbor whom she always saw when they were both out walking their dogs first thing in the morning. Although they had never spoken before, they shared the indirect link of both walking their dogs in the same neighborhood at the same time, and knew each other by sight, so that when Maggie came to the door her presence served as that 'kind of approval' of someone in the neighborhood. It did not matter that one might not precisely know the other person on the side of the doorstep, only that there was a shared community membership.

In each of these cases, the process of participating in a campaign provided the opportunity to communicate not just the candidate's message, but the message that the participant themselves had chosen that candidate, offering a personal endorsement as another piece of what was being communicated to voters. Especially in the cases where there was not a direct relationship between the voter and campaign worker, participants meant this to convey something about the positive way the candidate was perceived by others in the same community. When such endorsements are made by participants who then go out and speak to voters who they know already – family members, friends, neighbors or acquaintances – they rely on pre-existing relationships and knowing something about the campaign volunteer. In other cases, the links between canvasser and voter can be even more distant, but still perceived to be helpful by campaign participants as they go about trying to persuade people. In short, campaign participants use these personal endorsements in order to try and drum up more support for a candidate.

But these endorsements are not the only way in which participants link candidates or campaigns to voters. In the next section, I address how participants view themselves as representatives of the candidate.

Representing

One theme that came out of the skills section is the concept of representing the candidate as part of being able to do field work well. In the act of canvassing and interacting with other party members and leaders, participants were charged with representing or ‘selling’ the candidate to selected publics. These answers applied to both canvassers and organizers, although there were some specific dimensions to representing which were only described by organizers. The practice of representing the candidates reverses the usual conception of the principal-agent relationship between elected (or aspiring) leaders and campaign workers. Rather than elected leaders representing citizens in the state, campaign workers represent the elected representatives to citizens. In a way, this reflects a reversal of the usual focus on citizens “penetrating” the state, so that citizen-representatives of elites are “penetrating” society. In this section, I explore how campaign participants describe doing field work well as a way of embodying representation.

Several participants, especially in the organizer roles, emphasized the need to be able to be a ‘mini-politician’ in their work: “I think you have to have a little politician in you yourself. And be comfortable being a surrogate candidate, you know cause when you're going door-to-door, or you're putting together house parties, or you're on the phone recruiting for speeches or rallies or events, you know you're a salesperson, you're a little bit of a political figure.” In this sense some saw themselves as needing to be a representative of the candidate, to make a good impression with individuals. Another participant talked about making twenty second conversations fifty or sixty times a night, and in that context emphasized that they “we are going in there as representatives of candidate” and had to try to “sell” the their employer’s candidacy.

The concept of representation extended beyond what organizers do to include volunteers and canvassers as well. One campaign distributed a “top tips” list of advice along with canvassing materials to their volunteers. The top tip listed was “Always smile and Be Polite,” with the instructions:

People will think of you when they see [the candidate] on the news, read about him in the papers, and as they walk into the voting booth. Inevitably, a small percentage of people will be rude, but remember, you are the face of the campaign.

The metaphor of volunteers being “the face” of the campaign is a clear reference to a sense of physical embodiment form of representation. Here, the participant *is* the candidate and campaign.

The concept of representing a candidate also had unique emotional and identity dimensions for organizers. Many reported feeling worn out, or “emotionally busted” in the words of one organizer, after an intense campaign (and the 2004 presidential election in particular). Much of this surely relates to the long hours and stressful workplace environment, but it also was a reflection of the emotional engagement that could happen when the concept of representing the candidate became too much about being the candidate. This could lead to a much stronger identification with a candidate on a personal level, and one organizer described how not being able to draw an emotional line between one of the candidates she worked for and her own self was an early mistake she learned not to repeat. In a less problematic dimension this close representative role for organizers meant that whatever one’s own policy preferences might be, as a member of a campaign’s staff it was expected that one would be advocating the candidate’s preferences only.

That this kind of representation was a strong norm can be demonstrated by my experience in one interview that, in all other respects, was somewhat of a failure. After several phone calls and rescheduled appointments, I finally sat down with one campaign staffer who was clearly not interested in speaking with me. Given that the recommendation to speak with her had come from an indirect supervisor, I believe that she saw speaking with me as part of her job, and thus the whole interview was like speaking not to an individual who had their own history, but interviewing An Organizer for This Campaign. Unlike the other interviews that were in neutral locations, such as coffee shops, or telephone conversations with participants who were at home or not in a political office, this one was conducted in the campaign office. We never really broke through the lack of trust in that interview, and this participant’s answers were shorter and less elaborate than all other interviews. Moreover, it was clear that all of the answers given were ‘the campaign line’. When I asked her if she had any goals for this particular election, the initial answer was no, just win. Then, after a pause and when I started to ask the next question, she

corrected herself to say the goal was better health care, immigration reform, and commitment to issues affecting working families – which were the key issues her candidate was campaigning on. Some questions which were more politically sensitive – such as whether or not the Democrats have a “big tent” and what she thought being progressive was – clearly caused some trouble for her to answer and still stay on the campaign script. These answers were, in fact, classic non-answers that glossed over any controversies which could have caused problems for the candidate.

Only at the very end of the interview, when I asked what kept her involved at what it meant to her, did I get any answer which clearly strayed from the campaign script and staffer role. She described how her mom used to always watch the evening news, and that was the thing they did together on a regular basis. It was really about thinking about her parents’ experiences, and how her mother taught her to pay attention that kept her involved at the end of a long day. In the long run, she was doing all this because she wanted them to get a better deal in life. Only these experiences which pre-dated the campaign organizer participation did the need to represent the candidate not apply. Otherwise, the concept of representing the campaign, and the candidate, shaped the entire interview.

Translating

Translation happens in two ways. First, translation involves turning a message and a candidate who is distant and abstract into one which is immediate and concrete. This act of translation can be perceived as having pitfalls for campaigns, who try to control that translation through guidance of what canvassers should or should not do and say. Second, translation involves movement across organizational boundaries. Recognizing these boundaries, and the ways in which translation is a function of those margins, is crucial for understanding how translation is a part of thick linkage.

Delivering the candidate’s message clearly was another key skill that participants emphasized in all roles, and often the need for message clarity was wrapped up in the broader concept of representing the candidate. One participant cited his professional

experience as a lawyer as an advantage in being able to stay “on message” for the candidate, saying “The same way [as a lawyer] if I'm working for the candidate. I know I'm representing that message and I don't want to impose - even if I disagree with that particular candidate on a given issue - I have to stay on message, because you're out there for, on behalf of that candidate.” A second participant emphasized the importance of organizers offering training for canvassers so that they could be confident and know what the candidate stood for, and thus deliver the candidate’s message clearly.

While there was a clear emphasis on presenting the candidate’s message and not their own, ‘personalizing’ a candidate’s message was seen as a good way to make the message delivery more authentic. In contrast to staying on message even whilst disagreeing, other participants talked about how it was ok for participants to explain why they were supporting a candidate as a good way of speaking to voters. “It’s good enough for you to tell people why you're supporting a candidate, and how they can find out more information” about the candidate, one participant explained. In the same “top tips” packet discussed above, the second tip was to “be informed,” telling volunteers to “review the talking points and the literature” but *also* “make sure you are able to talk about at least one of your own personal reasons for supporting [the candidate].” Indeed, while canvassing on this particular campaign, my canvassing partner had a story from her own experience about the effects of education funding cuts, in order to explain her support for the candidate.

Another packet with a list of do’s and don’ts included under the latter section, “DON’T argue.” Such an admonition was both practical in that arguing with someone was a waste of breath and time that could be spent on identifying voters who supported a campaign. But arguing also risked looking, well, argumentative. The perception that a campaign’s supporters were dogmatic and/or extreme was an image that no one wanted to be associated with. Hark back to the descriptions of what ‘progressive’ meant in the previous chapter – regardless of whether one identified as progressive or not, whatever one wasn’t was derided as brittle, dogmatic, or ideological. So while no one explicitly spelled out in the campaigning packets that argumentativeness was bad because of this image, argumentativeness had negative

connotations in terms of perceptions and images of what ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Democrats were like. In other words, while arguing could theoretically be a form of perseverance and good way to drive home a candidate’s message, in practice it was actually perceived as sending the wrong message about the ideological brittle-ness of campaign volunteers and supporters, and therefore of the candidate him or herself.

In another example of how message delivery could adversely transform the message being delivered, one participant relayed a crude joke which relates to this concern about what the canvassers themselves say about a campaign. Next door to the field office where he worked was a methadone clinic, whose clients would occasionally come by on weekend mornings for the free coffee and donuts that were on offer for canvassing volunteers. Amongst several of the staff, the running joke was that they would organize these clients to canvass for the opposition, sending them out across the target area with flyers and attempting to turn out the vote. That, so the joke went, would be the most effective way to get votes for their candidate.

In this sense, when participants were ‘delivering’ the candidate’s message there was a dual mechanism of both delivering the candidate’s message (and not one’s own views) *and* a process of transforming it (through what was important according to one’s own views, one’s conduct, dress and demeanor). The guidance that campaigns offered participants on how to dress, their demeanor, and being the ‘face’ of the campaign attempt to guide what a message becomes through delivery. The attempt at control is an implicit acknowledgement that the words on a flyer, indeed the flyer itself, are not the only messages being communicated.

Like Lipsky’s street level bureaucrats (1980), participants became the actual face of a larger organization. While organizationally marginal, these participants at the fringes and the boundaries of the campaign organization are also the front line of the candidate’s or party’s organization. Working in these spaces and roles means not just implementing policy at one’s discretion (as in the case of Lipsky’s bureaucrats) but of translating, transacting and assembling (Newman 2008). So it is with those participants, volunteers and organizers alike, who are the ‘front line’ of the party and responsible for taking their work out into the field. By their very presence, participants add to, transform, and otherwise adjust the message created and dictated

by a campaign's central strategy unit in the process of delivering it on the doorstep, in meetings, and over the phone. The translation work is a part of practice, and so is hardly verbalized, but rather acted out in practice. The presentation of self as the candidate, and the addition of one's own reasons for support are each an act of translation. As is the case with so many acts which are taken for granted or go unspoken, it is the transgression of these translation acts, as in the case of the two examples below, which throws them into relief.

If the issue of being the front line of a campaign was as simple as just conveying the candidate's core message, then transgressions, like being poorly dressed, argumentative or a drug addict, would not be such a worry (or joke) for campaign staff. The personal views added to the message amount to a translation of what the candidate's policies *mean* in an essential way. With the canvasser I went out with, it was what those policies meant for education in an everyday way. If translation is the transformation of an original for a different audience (community of practice) by way of expressing meaning, then the acts of field work are, essentially, acts of translation.

Translation and boundaries

Understanding participation as involving translation also throws organizational boundaries into relief. Without boundaries, or without two different communities, translation would not be necessary. In her account of organizational boundaries and knowledge translation, Yanow points out how those people at organizational margins are 'border crossers' engaged in everyday activities of translation (Yanow 2004). For Freeman (2008), translation involves moving between distinct communities of practice who may engage the same issue in different conversations of meaning. Like linguistic translators, these participants at organizational boundaries are engaged in not just transliteration or exchanging equals – unknown object A for known object B – but in the art of translating meaning through their practice. Those at the organizational boundaries are engaged in multiple organizations and groups, and doing their job requires being able to translate practice as it is done among one community to practice, amongst a different set of actors, amongst another.

This is different from Wenger's concept of borders for a community of practice. Early, he focused on being at the periphery and working in, later he did talk about translating in and out again (comparing) but always with an element of transforming the actual organization or one's own role. Yanow, on the other hand, emphasizes how being at the organizational periphery can in fact be a relatively stable position, and this can also be useful for understanding how translation works. The goal is not to turn the organizational knowledge into something else permanently, but to transport, via the act of representation, the actual campaign message/candidate message outside the party and into a different social realm, and, hopefully, bring some of those people back into the campaign – at the very least as voters, and possibly even as supporters or fellow volunteers.

Seeing translation as a form of boundary work implicitly involves participants transporting or moving across those lines. As obvious as it sounds, when campaign participants are also members of their community and/or talk about politics with their own network of friends, family, coworkers and neighbors, they cross back and forth between a political campaign group and a social group. When they greet other citizens at the doorstep, emphasize that they are a volunteer and say how a campaign matters to them, they show what a campaign message means in terms of everyday issues and implications for personal lives. Rather than leaving such campaign issues and messages in the realm of being only the concern of political elites and candidates, participants demonstrate what a campaign message or candidate is for “real” people. They take political issues out of the elite spheres and cross into everyday spheres.

Such acts also mean that candidates and campaign leaders are no longer the sole producers of campaigns and campaign messages. The campaign message, transformed via the presence of grassroots organizers and volunteers, becomes co-produced by elites and engaged citizens and transported into the immediate lives of whoever campaigners see at the doorstep, in public, or speak to on the phone. By transporting, translating, endorsing and representing, grassroots campaign participants blur the boundaries between political organizations and social networks, between elites and citizens. It is this crucial aspect of translation and transportation

which engenders trust and campaign credibility. This, in turn, is the stuff of thick linkage.

Trust and Credibility

Credibility comes through establishing trust in one-to-one interactions at the doorway and on the campaign trail, and it came from presenting an image of a candidate (and campaign) as connected to local people, issues, and life. From the perspective of campaign leaders, perhaps one of the key aspects of doing field work is that it is intended to increase the credibility of the candidate as this can result in more votes. Lest one be tempted to think that campaign field work is nothing but a force for good, it is important to keep in mind the ways in which these bonds of trust and community credibility can be faked. Although there were no cases of ‘astroturfing’ (where a hired campaign masquerades as a local grassroots campaign) apparent in this study, the concepts of faking those bonds between canvassers and voters and faking community connections highlights the ways in which credibility is a part of campaign field work. In this sense, field work cannot always or does not always create trust and credibility (no more than every single canvasser interacts exclusively with their own social network), but recognizing this potential and the ways in which field work can engage in credibility and the production of thick linkage helps us to understand the fuller normative dimensions of campaign field work.

Recalling back to the section of campaigns skills, one of the sections mentioned under ‘people skills’ was the ability to find or create some kind of bond with voters and engender a sense of trust. One participant who talked about being a representative of the candidate linked this with the ability to connect, saying, “we are going in there as representatives of candidate not only try and sell yourself but also try and *make that connection* to you know get people to identify not only with the candidate but with the person you just had the conversation with” [emphasis added]. Of course, connecting could be a matter of good conversation skills as much as anything else, as he also added that this connection had to happen in “twenty second conversations, fifty, sixty times a night.”

In the interviews with participants who had either held elective office or run for office, this aspect of making connections and gaining trust was more explicit than in the descriptions of non-candidate participants. While most of them spoke of this positively, only woman who ran for office and found the experience overall distasteful, was particularly unhappy with this shallow, quick conversation aspect of field work. “You know the trouble is if you spend 30 seconds talking to somebody you can only always get to a very surface level talking about things. And you kind of repeat that next door, over and over again you never really get to - I mean the whole process encourages, or I should say discourages, any depth of thinking or conversation about issues.”

Yet for others, this was a good thing. Another spoke positively about the connections one made on the campaign trail, saying “Well, as everybody says, there's no better way than to make your case than touching people. And quite literally, touching [he touches my shoulder]. People like touching, holding their hand, shaking their hand, and that really is one of the great things about politics.” Most explicitly, two participants who also held elected office were very clear about trust as being a dimension of interaction at the doorway. One elected representative found this one of the most rewarding aspects of campaigning, saying that when voters are “willing to just open up their lives to you and share with you, and that you have to understand that for many people, that's a real gift of *trust* someone's giving you, and that you're now the *trustee* of that information” (emphasis added). Finally, another participant put trust within the context of getting votes, saying people “vote on *if they trust someone*. So, a lot of the people I talk to say they don't vote by the party, they vote by the person. And I don't know if that's entirely true, but fact that I've met them at their house seems to convince them to vote for me” (emphasis added).

These last two descriptions highlight different aspects of trust. In the first example, trust is something that is given to the candidate and becomes part of the responsibility for making policy. In the second example, trust is an implicit dimension of a voter's decision and building it leads to votes. However, note that in both examples trust is not pre-existing but built through the act of speaking to voters

on the doorstep. Rather than innate or organic, as in Durkheim's solidarity, trust is built through campaigning interactions.

That campaigning can build trust is captured in Rahn, Brehm and Carson's work on elections as national institutions. However, given that their work is on presidential campaigns the concept of who one trusts and why does not fit the circumstances here. It is a binary relationship of trust which the two elected representatives seem to speak of here, rather than a generalized trust for political institutions or based on conceptions of the imagined community. This trust, here, is much more immediate and specific.

Is such trust built with volunteers and campaign organizers as well as candidates? I argue that although it is not as explicit as in these descriptions, from the perspective of participants the process of endorsing and representing candidates tacitly engages with and builds trust between the campaign worker and voter. Thus our campaign organizer tries to build "connections" through twenty second conversations, fifty times a night. Being a "moral compass" for friends involves an act of trusting another's judgment of who to vote for. And explaining how a candidate's platform for education would affect one's own job is implicitly a testimony that yes, this plan is believable, I vouch for it and you can trust it too.

Advocacy, endorsement, translation, and representation are not done simply for their own sake, of course, but to get votes. And it is this connection between credibility and vote getting that is emphasized in written campaign documents. "Even the best media consultants," the DLCC campaign training manual explains, "cannot produce a mailing or radio spot that will move that voter as well as another human being can" (p. 25). In this context door-to-door canvassing has four goals. The first three should by now be familiar – identify votes, identify volunteers and/or donors, and increase name recognition for a candidate. The fourth point is to "establish the credibility of the campaign in the community." No further explanation of how or why a campaign would need to establish credibility is explained, and how this credibility works is taken for granted. The only other time the word "credible" is used in the document is in relation to naming the campaign co-chairs, and this makes a more explicit link between credibility and the issue of linking a campaign to the community. In

determining whether or not a person would be good in this honorary role, the manual raises the following questions and points to consider: “Will this person’s name on your literature, or letterhead, be significant to the constituents in your district? Will having this person as a chairperson lend credibility to your candidacy? You should seek a person of stature in the community” (p 9). *Credibility* is a demonstration that the candidate knows who the people of stature in a community are, and implies an endorsement by person of stature for a campaign. In this sense, the concept of credibility described here is quite similar to Scarrow’s analysis of credibility as something that party elites value

Faking it

If one-on-one interactions could be an opportunity for imitating or attempting to fake real warmth and interest through shallow conversations, then the same concept applied to a grassroots campaign at large would be ‘astroturfing.’ Unlike ‘real’ grassroots campaigns that do engage people in the community and demonstrates local knowledge by campaign workers, astroturfing refers to a campaign of paid participants which intends to have the appearance of actually being a local campaign (in the same way that green plastic shreds are used to imitate real grass playing fields). In order to qualify as astroturfing it is not just that a campaign would use hired canvassers, but that it would make some claim to being a locally-based organization or among the people in some way. Astroturfing is qualitatively different from the process of trying to build trust on very little personal interaction in that, in its derogatory implications, there is deceit. On both the individual and campaign level, we can see how door-to-door campaigning did not necessarily build trust – yet these transgressions serve to point out the trust and linkage dimensions of field work.

Although there were no cases of astroturfing that were readily visible in the 2006 primary campaigns, more than a few supporters of one of the primary gubernatorial candidates had a distaste for the use of paid telephone canvassers by another candidate. One participant described a tense conversation with a friend who was possibly a supporter of another primary candidate in which she alluded to the fact

that the other candidate was “buying” his way into the race with advertisements and not using a grassroots campaign. While clearly this supporter was biased, the lack of a clear grassroots organization was one less reason to like the opposition. Essentially, astroturfing offends the local community endorsement aspects of grassroots campaigning, and therefore lacks the actual and real trust and bonds that can be built between voters and a campaign. But there could not be the concept of astroturfing if there was not a tacit credibility that grassroots field work builds in the first place. If field work was just a matter of communicating messages, then it would not matter who delivered the message or identified and mobilized voters. Marking astroturfing as fake grassroots campaigning implies that there is more produced in field work than ‘just’ the execution of voter mobilization and delivery of a campaign message. That ‘more’ is political solidarity. As I conceive it and drawing on Bang’s (2004) notion of the same name, political solidarity is distinct from the exclusively social connotations of Granovetter’s weak ties. However, where that is exclusively a construct for the social realm, I believe political solidarity applies specifically to the relationships between citizens as voters, campaign participants, and elected representatives. I got beyond Bang in placing political solidarity within the context of party and electoral relations and as such, political solidarity is the added dimension which transforms thin linkage to thick.

Discussion

In summary, in this chapter I discussed three different ways in which participants link campaigns and candidates to the voters with whom they interact. These linking processes – of endorsing, translating, and representing – are all ways of building relationships between voters and candidates and ideally help to persuade voters to support their campaigns. They produce political solidarity, which can be understood as another dimension of linkage.

However, I think these instances go beyond the thin conception of linkage as it is conceived in terms of being an exchange of votes for potential policy influence. What is happening in field work engages in a much broader spectrum of concepts – translation, borders, endorsements, trust, and credibility. These activities, undertaken

by campaign participants provide a thicker version of linkage in that they conceptually go beyond an exchange relationship. These are activities and embodied acts that are undertaken in order to get more votes, but they are acts and products in their own right as well. Rather than linkage being a dyad relationship exclusively between voter and representative, or a generalized trust by voters of political institutions, the notion of thick linkage relates to how campaigners in partisan elections play a role as boundary workers. This boundary role carves out a different space for participants than that traditionally conceived in 'thin' linkage. It involves productively more than conveying a party's message as is, and imagines participants in a more robust and meaningful way than simply as 'ambassadors.' Understanding translation as more than just transmission transforms the place of participants in the concept of linkage.

This boundary work both uses and, in some cases, is productive of a trust which is not abstract and generalized but produced in specific interactions happening between specific people. While specific and not general, it may still be fragile, and something closer to a sense of being commonly bound together, rather than a more solid notion of trust. Taken altogether, what campaign volunteers and organizers appear to be doing – between establishing connections, emphasizing real or imagined neighborliness in campaign appeals, and representatives talking of the trust established at the door – is produce a bondedness that is distinctly political in character. It is not the exchange of votes for influence per se, nor can it solely be conceptualized as trust, as I think these connections and bonds are much too tenuous to be characterized as trust. The explicit attempts to establish this sense of togetherness, camaraderie, or we're-all-in-it-together sum up the additional aspects of field work which are so tacit. The reasons for establishing political solidarity are strategic in that they aimed at getting votes, but the product is thick linkage. The thin conception of elite-citizen relations, which is exclusively instrumental, misses these additional dimensions of participation.

Thick linkage has important implications for the "problem of uncoupling" (Bang 2004). Bang uses the case of Danish citizens to make his point, but the problem has been noted more widely in comparative and American research (Wattenberg 2000,

Crenson and Ginsberg 2002, respectively). It may not solve the changing configurations of power and networks which make decisions which, in Bang's description, are part of the problem that citizens feel excluded in the wider world. But it does attempt to bring voters back into the electoral process and to engage with political elites – even if 'only' through the representative of that political elite on their doorstep. But by going door-to-door and engaging in grassroots field work, participants translate abstract people and policies into issues of everyday relevance and immediate accessibility, essentially providing the opportunity to re-couple. If grassroots participation does have the knock on effect of producing these bonds, it would be interesting to see how tenuous, or durable, they really are and what the implications are for the thin parts of linkage. Under what circumstances does the we're-all-in-it-together sense of bondedness last beyond the voting booth? Do voters whose doors have been knocked on feel more empowered or entitled to see policy outcomes from their representatives than voters whose doors have not been knocked on? What happens afterwards between the campaign worker and the voters they speak to, if they do not know each other – do they speak again? If so, about what? If not, why? If thick linkage only operates during election years, then it may still be important for the problem of uncoupling, but what happens afterwards may be equally important for future study.

In the next, penultimate chapter I address what Bang cites as one of the causes of uncoupling, that is, the 'professionalization' of politics. While the professionalization thesis is a narrative about system change, it is inextricably linked to narratives and profiles of the people who change with it. How do the organizers and volunteers in this case study compare with these profiles? As Bang's formulation would suggest, the individual profile and political system combination are often followed on by normative assessments about the healthiness of democracy, parties, or society. By drawing on the data presented thus far, I make the case for the organizers and volunteers discussed from this case study as linked to yet another stage in party system change.

Chapter 7: Professional organizers and expert volunteers

In *Politics as a Vocation*, Weber distinguishes between those who engage in politics in two different ways. Those who engage in politics as an avocation do so occasionally, while those for whom it is a vocation are the professionals. This latter class are distinct in that these men (and it was only men) either live ‘for’ or ‘off’ or politics compared to their avocational counterparts. Unlike politics as an avocation, as a vocation politics is ‘their life’ (Weber 1919). Weber’s distinction continues on in research on political participation and parties today, where those for whom politics is a profession and are separated from those for whom it is an amateur pursuit. It is a distinction with implications not only for different kinds of people who participate in politics, but inextricably linked to the political party organization models in which they participate. When party machines ruled 19th century American politics, the “Boss Tweeds” across the country were characterized by their loyalty to the party and pragmatic approach to policy ends; when New Politics activists swept through the Democratic Party in an era of movement politics they were ‘typed’ as idealistic and uninterested in party’s long term maintenance. More recently, the political consultant – slicked hair, no sleep, blackberry attached to the hip, too much caffeine – is the creature of a postmodern, media-oriented, micro-targeted and professional affair. These associations of participatory type capture the popular imagination, but they are also the subject of scholarly pursuit, which both expands the portrait of participatory type and enumerates the state of the party organization. More than a symbolic association, these participatory profiles and system profiles go hand in hand.

As such, normative assessments of the system and the person apply, in some cases, to both the participatory type and the organization in which that participation takes place. For the progressive reformers and writers party bosses were the symbols of a corrupt system; to defenders of the American party system of compromise, movement activists in both the Republican and Democratic Parties were subject to skeptical, if not alarmed, notice. Nor have contemporary professional campaigners been spared the normative assessments of the modern era, blamed in the popular

discourse (Armstrong and Moulitsas 2006, Klein 2006) and associated in scholarly press (Bang 2004, Crenson and Ginsberg 2002, Fisher 2006, Stoker 2007) with the problem of declining and meaningful citizen participation in elections.

What of the volunteers and organizers interviewed and observed in the Massachusetts grassroots political campaigns? How do they fit into these types, changes and systems? In this chapter, I argue that the construction of participatory types along professional and amateur lines is part and parcel to the understanding of the state of the political party system. Given the changes in internet technology, campaign finance, and campaigning tactics it seems plausible that the Democratic Party is undergoing yet another transformation and as such correlates with another, different set of distinctions between kinds of participation in party politics.

I sum up the characteristics of field organizers and volunteers discussed so far throughout the thesis. Rather than fitting to either the profile of ‘professional’ political operatives or ‘amateur’ participants as developed in the literature, I argue that the field organizers and volunteers described here are best understood as participants in a new era of the party system. While there are some characteristics of volunteers and organizers which relate to the previous profiles drawn of participants, I show that there are as many similarities as differences between organizers and volunteers, defying the dichotomy of amateur versus professional. This understanding of the characteristics relevant to how organizers and volunteers practice participation has important implications for studying participation in the future and for normative assessments of the state of party politics as well. If other kinds of participation outside parties and campaigns – in civic organizations, public discourse and journalism, for instance – then the amateur/professional distinction would be better off as a point of comparison than a point of departure.

In the next section, I outline profiles of ‘amateurs’ and ‘professionals’ in the US parties, and how these profiles are linked to specific kinds of party organizations. Then, I present data on the characteristics of both volunteers and organizers. Much of this discussion draws on material from previous chapters, either condensing or expanding the material to draw out the similarities and differences among participants in different roles. Finally, I discuss the implications for understanding

participants as part of new era in the party system, and for future studies of participation and assessing the health of civic engagement.

Professional and amateur participants

Vocation and avocation: the roots of professionals and amateurs

The defining feature of politics as an avocation, according to Weber, was that it occurred only occasionally and when men were summoned to participate. “We are all ‘occasional’ politicians when we cast our ballot or consummate a similar expression of intention, such as applauding or protesting in a ‘political’ meeting, or delivering a ‘political’ speech, etc,” he explains (1919 [2008]).⁵⁰ Anyone who came to politics only occasionally, including members of parliament, state councils, and even a prince’s “auxiliary” military forces did politics as an avocation because these more elite members were also only doing so on occasion rather than all the time. That is, “politics is, neither materially nor ideally, ‘their life’ in the first place” (Weber 1919). On the other hand Weber presents those for whom it is a vocation, and these individuals live off of (materially) or for (ideally) politics. Weber includes a whole host of types of vocational (professional) politicians, including clergy, lawyers, court nobility in England, journalists, and machine party politicians in the US, the last of whom he describes as “men interested in the management of politics” (Weber 1919).

The distinction between vocation and avocation is a relatively small point in an essay mainly known for developing Weber’s definition of the modern state and what kind of politicians are and should be in charge of it. It is a distinction that continues to be used to frame and define what kind of political participation is studied, albeit in ways that are transformed from Weber’s original definition. All of the studies referred to thus far on political participation concern themselves exclusively with those who do politics on an occasional basis. The most important de facto change from Weber’s concept in the way these studies treat avocation is that these studies of political participation are of those who do politics ‘occasionally’ *and* are in some way ‘normal’ citizens. The more elite political participants that Weber cites

(parliamentary representatives, advisory councils) are not envisioned to be part of avocation. One could argue that this could be because there are no avocational roles at the elite level in the modern state, but this possibility is not really considered in the work on avocational or amateur politics. So ‘avocation’ in the modern sense means both occasional, everyday, and non-specialist.

Defining ‘professional’ politicians has also changed away from Weber’s initial definition of the term. Noting the lack of information available on party staff (despite their increased importance), Webb and Fisher begin their article on professionalism by offering a definition, based on the sociological work developed on professions:

A professional may be regarded as a member of the workforce with a relatively high status and strong position in the labor market flowing from a special degree of expertise, commitment, autonomy and capacity for self-regulation which in turn reflects a particular education and formal training (2003: 11-12).

This classic-ideal type is, they note, not always achieved equally among all staff members in their sample of British Labour party staff. Perhaps more importantly, this definition (and similar to the one created by Romzek and Utter (1991) in their work on Congressional staff people) is neither the same as Weber’s original sense, nor does it actually resemble the definition of ‘profession’ in the truest sociological sense of the term, where professional is defined by becoming an accredited or licensed member of a guild. The definition is actually based on doing something full-time *and* on the key characteristics that can be attributed to professionals. These key characteristics are the high status and strong position in the labor market, expertise, commitment, autonomy and capacity for self-regulation.

Further, Brante (1990) identifies ‘tacit knowledge’ as a key characteristic of professionals. ‘Tacit knowledge’ is relatively inaccessible to the general population; it is usually attained through practice (especially in the form of an apprenticeship or ‘enculturation’ into the workplace environment), and is a form of knowledge that cannot be standardized into a formal or university-based curriculum (Brante 1990).⁵¹

⁵¹ The similarities between this definition of ‘tacit knowledge’ and ‘local’ or practice knowledge will be addressed later in the chapter.

In sum, being a professional means being involved on a full-time basis and having a degree of efficacy, commitment, independence, and specialized knowledge.

Key characteristics of amateurs and professionals

The key characteristics of amateurs as described in the literature on American political parties are entirely different. Partially, I believe, this is due to the way in which the questions of participation have been framed through and around rational choice, so that *motives* play the most important role, front and center. To draw out these characteristics, it helps to review some of the specific history of studying party activists in the US.

In mid-century, political scientists started to chronicle the emergence of a new kind of political activist. Unlike the regular activists who were motivated by solidary rewards, identified with the party, and valued compromise, the new amateur reformers were of a different “breed.” These new participants were, as Kirkpatrick paraphrased,

urban and suburban, college educated, geographically and socially mobile, had relatively high incomes, young, heavily Jewish, largely liberal types who brought to politics distrust for party organization, disdain for the organization regulars and the paid professionals who staffed the organizations, distaste for a politics based on party loyalty, and a high regard for verbal skills and the articulation of issues and for politics based on ideology rather than on economic interests. (1976: 9)

In her comprehensive study of the 1972 delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions, Kirkpatrick highlighted a number of ways in which these new style (later referred to as New Politics) activists were different from their other party activist counterparts. Kirkpatrick argued that the incipient trends found in 1972 delegate styles included a changing motivation structure in which amateurs were more likely to be motivated by policy outcomes and ascribed to an ideological style that was “holistic, internally consistent ideologies at both ends of the political spectrum” (351). In addition, “significant numbers of Democrats” (*ibid*) were less attached to the party and had negative attitudes towards party maintenance practices (e.g., compromising policy goals to build coalitions). In this sense they resembled the

anti-party tradition of viewing the party organization as a hindrance to achieving democratic ends (355). Many delegates, especially Democrats, did not even view winning as their primary goal.

A lot of energy and expertise went into researching these specific claims about the changing motives of New Politics activists. Hofstetter (1971) argued that the analytic categories of 'amateur' and 'professional' lacked conceptual validity because you could not have the category and characteristics be the same thing without confusing the dependent and independent variables. Others showed that New Politics delegates are in fact interested in winning elections in later years (Abramowitz et al 1983, Stone and Abramowitz 1983), and party regulars were not so ready to throw all principles out the window in the name of winning (Costatini and King 1996). Other studies showed that a third or more of delegates to national conventions could be categorized as having a mixed professional and amateur style (Soule and Clark 1975, Hitlin and Jackson 1977, Nakamura 1980). Finally, a good portion of insurgent or New Politics delegates did socialize into party attachment and identity profiles which more closely resembled their 'old' party activist counterparts (Dodson 1990, Miller and Jennings 1986).

From this work, we can draw out that the key characteristic of party activists is their (possibly changing) motives. By the early 1970s it seemed that partisans were motivated more by policy and ideological goals than their predecessors, they were less attached to the party organization and they cared less about winning than their predecessors. Later work on attitudes and engagement separated the issue of party attachment and/or sentiment as independent from ideological or party motives. As the literature review in the previous chapter would suggest, much of the research on motives measures party attachment as separate from ideological motives.

Independently, both this research on party activists and that on party professionals are useful and internally coherent. The problem comes when one tries to compare the two. While for two of the key characteristics – efficacy and relation to the party organization – there are roughly similar questions asked of each group, two other key characteristics – motives and 'tacit' knowledge – are researched either for amateurs

or for professionals, but not both. This leaves one in the position of trying to compare apples and oranges, but apple cores with orange peels.

As addressed in chapter five, many surveys include some measure of efficacy but there is a wide variation between different surveys on amateur participation as to how this is treated. What all these studies do have in common, however, is the largely prevailing presumption that individual participants have no influence on outcomes. On the other hand, for professionals, a sense of efficacy is part of being a professional, and the question of whether or not they have any influence is left unasked – although perhaps implicitly it is assumed that they do. Moreover, Webb and Fisher’s “ethos” of effectiveness is also different from the conceptualization of efficacy for activists in that this ethos is a collectively shared notion of doing work in an efficient manner has no equivalent in the research on activists.

Secondly, the question of how professionals and activists relate to the party is treated differently for each group. In the research on party activists, the question is framed as one of changing attachments to the party. The starting assumption, working from Kirkpatrick, is that activists *are* attached to the party and the drop in party attachment is a deviation away from the norm. When Miller and Jennings, and later Dodson, show that attachment is to some extent a matter of socialization, this reinforces that party attachment is essentially the norm for activists. For professionals, on the other hand, their relatively high status in the workplace, commitment to getting the job done well (efficacy), and self-regulation all add up to a degree of autonomy that non-professionals lack. In other words, the norm of relations with the party organization is one of being able to take it or leave it. Like the research on party activists and party attachment, the concept that professionals are autonomous may be stronger in theory than in actual fact. Nonetheless, to the extent that the attitudes about party in the two groups can be compared, it gives the impression of two opposite sides of the spectrum – activists who are highly attached and professionals who are not at all attached to the party.

The other two important characteristics – motives and tacit knowledge – are incomparable because they are not measured, researched, or assumed to be relevant for both groups. While for understanding activists motives are key, they are not asked

about in the same way for professionals. From a narrow rational choice perspective this makes sense, because the ‘reward’ for professionals is their pay, making solidary or purposive incentives irrelevant, while for activists these latter incentives are the basis of participation. These assumptions also serve to reinforce the view created by the comparison of attitudes towards the party. If you take that the stronger party loyalty together with either solidary or purposive motives (or both) for party activists on the one hand, with autonomy from the party and no real solidary or purposive motives for professionals on the other, one is given the impression of a strong emotional relationship with the work of participation (and the party) for activists but not professionals. While the former are intimately wrapped up in what happens, the latter are cool and detached.

The focus on ‘tacit knowledge’ for professionals but not for activists provides one more point of difference. Basically while professionals do develop tacit knowledge, there is no way of knowing, based on previous research, whether or not activists develop such knowledge, and whether they do so in a similar manner to professionals. On knowledge, then, it is impossible to compare what is only researched for one group.

Table 7.1 sums up the key characteristics of professionals and amateurs. There appears to be relatively little in common between the two groups. Amateurs take part in politics occasionally, are non-specialists, and non-elite members of the public. They are generally attached to the party (especially after a period of socialization), and the ideological purposes of their work and solidarity in participation are the most important reasons for their participation. Despite the apparent importance of outcomes to activists, however, they are not particularly effective in influencing outcomes – even if they think they are. In contrast, those for whom politics is a vocation – the professionals – work full-time are experts at what they do, and go about their work with a sense of efficiency and, presumably, an ability to get the job done. Because their incentives for participating are monetary, purposive and solidary incentives for professionals are not relevant or consulted. Despite the fact that they draw material benefits from the party, emotionally and psychologically they remain

relatively autonomous from the party. In short, they are, in ideal type, are totally different.

Table 7.1: Key characteristics of amateurs and professionals

Characteristic	Amateurs	Professionals
Full-time/part-time	Part-time	Full-time
Paid/Unpaid	Unpaid	Paid
Motives	Mixed motives (solidary and purposive)	N/A
Ideology	Some more ideologically extreme?	N/A
Party loyalty	Some more	N/A
Efficacy	Low/none	High efficacy
Expertise	N/A	High
Group autonomy	N/A	Autonomous, self-regulating

Participatory type and party organization

In the first issue of the first volume of *Party Politics*, Richard Katz and Peter Mair set out a series of models of party organization and their role in democracy. Written in part to counter the party decline thesis, they argued that the mass party was not the ‘right’ or natural state of affairs, but only one “temporally limited and contingent model” of party organization (Katz and Mair 1995: 5). Western European parties, they argued, had gone through a series of changes since starting with the cadre model, then going stages of the mass party and catch-all party until the 1990s, at which point they theorized that a ‘cartel party’ was becoming the relevant model of party organization. Rather than decline per se, party organizations were simply undergoing periods of change.

Katz and Mair’s work has mostly applied to the European context, and there is some debate over how well it fits the US parties.⁵² More importantly, their description of party changes includes descriptions of funding sources *and* personnel, linking the kind of participation in party organization with the overall model. Farrell and Webb

⁵² In the original article, Katz and Mair class American parties examples of the ‘catch-all’ model, but see Ware (2006) for a contrasting view. Aldrich uses a different set of party organization classifications to describe the transformation of American parties, referring to mass and service parties instead.

(2002) make a similar association in their description of how parties have transformed into campaigning organization, looking specifically at the staffing of campaigns at different points (see also pp. 17-22 in chapter one for a description of these changes in the US). In short, the profiles of participants change along with the models of the organizations they are in.

The amateur and professional profile also fit within specific models of the Democratic Party over time. Those studying amateur participants in the mid-twentieth century saw their arrival as hastening the end of the mass party organization (Wilson 1963, Kirkpatrick 1976). This was replaced by what Aldrich (1995) referred to as the party as a 'service organization,' which was run and staffed by the new professionals. It would be an overstatement to say that there were no professionals in the sense that Farrell and Webb (2002) or Romzek and Utter (1991) meant before the parties transformed into service organizations, or that amateurs stopped participating once parties became service organizations. But the association of one kind of participant profile over another in the different party models forms a key part of our conception of the party organizations.

The following section looks at the key characteristics of volunteers and organizers. I look at five key characteristics for each group: time spent motives, efficacy, attitudes towards the party, and tacit knowledge. This draws on data presented in the previous chapters, plus additional data on efficacy as a group norm and attitudes towards the party. At several points I compare the findings here with previous ones, indicating where the literature on professionals is similar to what the data on organizers compiled here seem to match, or where amateurs and volunteers match. At the end of the section I will discuss how successful the volunteers-amateurs and professionals-organizers match is.

Key characteristics of volunteers and organizers

Occasional and constant participation

In chapter three, I stated that volunteers *usually* participated on a part-time basis and organizers *usually* participated on a full-time basis. Informal advisors were by definition part-time. This difference in time spent produced probably the key difference in experience between volunteers and organizers. While volunteers stayed rooted in their usual social networks, organizers lived the campaign (in the sense of living ‘for’ in addition to ‘off’) to a much greater extent. Joe explained the differences between being involved as a full-time organizer and his previous roles on a less hours-intense, volunteer basis:

When you are full time staff, it is an entirely different world [from volunteering]. You are in a world where all the rules are changed. There's only a few things that are important, and they all revolve around the candidate and the campaign, and the people you're working with. And it means something different about how much you work, how intense you are, how you socialize, certainly, with the twenty- and even some thirty-somethings I've seen on the campaign, their social lives revolve around it. They'll work until midnight and then all go out together and do something. It's much more of like a college environment that way.

The main distinction was of a qualitatively different kind of experience. This all-encompassing experience did pose a particular problem for the organizers that volunteers did not have, namely the ability to keep a sense of one's own place and ego. One staff organizer said that an early mistake she made in a previous campaign was getting too emotionally involved with the outcome of the race, so that she was overwrought by the end. Three other organizers described the problem of keeping one's own ‘ego’ in check and remembering that the campaign was not about them. “It's very easy to sort of lose track and get caught up in the moment or let one small issue dominate your thinking where that you lose track of the bigger picture,” as one organizer explained it. Yet none of the volunteers I spoke with identified these kinds of problems as part of their experience.

While this clearly puts some space between the two groups, what is interesting is that it runs counter to the stereotype drawn out of the literature in the previous section. Amateurs, after all, are supposed to be the ones emotionally drawn into participating,

whilst professionals stay cool and maintain a certain distance from the course of events. But the intensity of the organizer experience, stemming from the very non-occasional characteristic of their participation, is reported as lending itself to a level of emotional involvement among staffers that was not as true of volunteers.

While this emotional involvement distinguished organizers from volunteers, one organizer also articulated a sense of being unlike other staffers as well. She described how field organizers tended to 'gang together' to deal with a sense of belonging neither to the world of volunteer participation of the canvassers, nor of the more 'professional' world of other campaign staff:

I meet people, either volunteers on the campaign, people from other constituency groups, or voters, they always say, "So what do you do for your job? For your real job?" Like, as if you could not be a professional person and do field. It's impossible to comprehend the concept that somebody would go out and interact with people and talk to voters as a full-time job, and that that's a professional and respectable thing to do. So, you have to contend with those sort of factors, but I think tends to lead to field staff sort of ganging up together and they become sort of insular, and there's a lot of dating, and friendships, and cliques within field staffs, and... I think it all stems out of this sort of feeling like they're outsiders, and being treated like they're less -- less qualified, less intelligent, less valuable, less professional than, say, the fundraisers or the communication staff, or whoever it might be.

For this participant, her experience as a full time field organizer made her qualitatively different from the other volunteers or constituents who were involved on a part-time basis. Yet at the same time, she also described the feeling on not being entirely part of the 'professional' world of fundraisers and other campaign staff. Field organizers did display some of the same tendencies as other contemporary professionalized political staff, in terms of bringing a certain ethos of getting work done and commitment to the work, but the identity described as being built up by the group was both separate from the purely volunteer world of participation, and not yet quite of the 'professional' status of other campaign staff roles.

Motives

While in this emotional involvement organizers are distinct from volunteers, the same does not hold true for motives and meaning drawn from participation. As was

discussed in chapter five, both volunteers and organizers reported solidary and purposive reasons for their participation. Material reasons did not factor substantially as answers for participants in any role at all. Of course, there is a key difference in how these answers about reasons were reached in the present study with how they are asked about in previous studies of participation.

Chapter five, on motives and meanings, deals with the reasons and gratifications participants reported in the context of *continuing* participation, while most surveys ask about why participants *joined* in the first place. If one looks at the reasons for joining, discussed in chapter three, there is one important difference to point out. In that chapter, I stated that those currently in organizer roles were more likely to cite interest in school or a sense of their own aptitude for what they were doing compared to volunteers. On the basis of these reasons for participation alone, more organizers do report motives for first getting involved (e.g., material) in the way that a rational choice theory would predict. However, many organizers also reported first getting involved through movement politics or because it was just a way of life.

Separating these reasons for first getting involved versus the rewards, gratifications and meaning of continued involvement thus provides a clearer picture of the similarities and differences between volunteers and organizers. While more organizers reported getting involved in the first place because of material reasons, in terms of thinking about their participation like as a job, not all of them did. Moreover, once it came to the gratifications and meaning of participation, their answers worked in the same framework of solidary reasons, purposive reasons, and beliefs as volunteers and informal advisors. The differences between the two lay in the *distribution* of which motives and reasons were reported between the two groups, with more organizers and informal advisors reporting gratification from a sense of being able to make a difference.

This difference fits with what Webb and Fisher describe as part of being professional. The sense of being able to get something done was largely only true for organizers, and not as true for participants. However, the “ethos” of efficacy extended beyond just the descriptions and practices of organizers. Instead, this ethos was shared as a group norm by organizers and volunteers alike.

The ethos of efficacy

Practice, as embodied ways of doing things, was also a reflection and embodiment of particular group norms, and especially the ethos of efficacy. Despite (or perhaps because of) the tendency to think of participants as activists as out of touch, unrealistic idealists with no sense of how to do practical things, the emphasis on efficacy is all the more apparent. Nor would this self-conscious emphasis appear to be entirely new; indeed, James Q. Wilson explained at length the pride with which his ‘amateur’ politicians boasted of their ability to run a good, organized, effective campaign as well as the professionals (Wilson 1963). So perhaps in reaction to this out-group perception, efficacy was emphasized throughout interviews and became part of the group identity.

However, the ethos of efficacy is also well described in relation to an understanding of the challenges of field work and what it takes to do it well. In the face of finite resources, time, and energy, the ability to discern what is effective and what is not was a prime component of being a good organizer and volunteer. The ethos of efficacy really linked the concept of one’s own ability and influence to outcomes. The focus on efficacy thus served to reinforce the notion that would could, in fact, make a difference.

Despite the fact that efficiency and the ability to sort what is practical from what is not was a clear theme that came through the interviews, participants had a difficult time explaining what it was or how one avoided wasting time. More often, they contrasted useful tasks with not useful ones, and the emphasis was always on prioritizing what was *really* important, instead of what appeared important. One participant offered this contrast: “people think that organizing data bases is really boring, but it’s probably the most important thing that needs to be done. You know, as opposed to, I dunno, making happy signs for the office.” Similarly, another participant who ran his own campaigns for elective office and worked on others described it as “I think also they [organizers] have to filter out what is practical or

pragmatic or useful, and what doesn't make any sense. For example, you know obsession with lawn signs is, it's almost useless, but a lot of people think its key.”

One common phrase that demonstrates this ethos of efficacy was the oft repeated observation about whether something was ‘the best use of my time.’ In one interview with a former Congressional staff member who was still involved in electoral politics, I asked if he ever attended his local ward committee. This participant responded, no, saying that given his strengths (including contacts with other government officials and expertise in several policy areas), it made more sense for him to “focus his time and energies” in a setting where those strengths would be the greatest asset. In other words, he chose to participate in ways that he perceived would have a greater impact – in his case, working with a campaign’s policy team to shape proposed plans on state level policies.

In the same vein, one volunteer compared how he was taking his time with the actions of others in the same city, focusing on how he thought he could be ‘good’ at it:

I feel like a lot of the people who are active [here], they're active in 50 things, and good at nothing... I guess I'm kind of taking the time - well I'll give you the opposite. I'm doing one thing, and hopefully be good at it. Let everybody else do the 50 petitions this summer, and the protesting on the environmental issues, and doing this and doing that. I'll just do one thing, and hope I can do it halfway decent.

The implicit comparison this participant made was with others who were not very effective. Being ‘good’, in his case, meant focusing all his energy and time on one campaign with the hope of having a maximum impact. Similarly, another volunteer reported organizing the time he had slotted out for political activities so that he could canvass for two candidates at once, reasoning that this was the ‘best use of my time.’

Using individual time effectively was also emphasized in campaigning documents and by organizational leaders. In the party Field Manual, in the section on attracting and keeping volunteers, the following advice was dispensed: “People will volunteer when they feel that their time is being used effectively. Focus your efforts on projects directly related to your purpose. *We're working to elect Democratic candidates and further Democratic causes.*” (p. 17, emphasis added) In other words, the group

leaders have a key role to play in helping individuals link the use of their time to organizational outcomes. And those outcomes are quite explicitly about winning elections.

Perhaps most importantly, field work was billed as *the* way to win elections in presentations from the state and national parties, and in discussions with participants at all levels belief in the effectiveness was generally agreed upon. In repeated power point presentations from the state coordinated campaign, Green and Gerber's '8.6 percent' rise in voter turnout from canvassing was used at the beginning of the presentation to convince participants to take part. The impact of a blanket 8.6% rise in Democratic voter turnout across the state (and in some cases, across the nation) was used to show how many more offices Democratic candidates would have won in 2004. Despite the somewhat dubious translation of the field experiment data into a claim of how many offices Democrats could have one, the message of such presentations is unmistakable: canvassing, which volunteers could take part in, is the most effective way to win offices. Nor was this an idea solely advocated by party and campaign leaders as a way to inspire participation, it was a concept shared by organizers and volunteers further down the hierarchical ladder as well. Several participants cited the '8.6%' rise in turnout.

One participant summed this notion of effectiveness in a 'confession' of what he thought about field work:

I know this is recorded but I'm sorry, I hate field, I hate making phone calls, I hate going door-to-door, I hate breaking out walk kits, I hate it. It's like tedious, and I don't like it. But it's the most effective way for our organization to run. If we're not effective, and we don't, if we don't win as much as we do on legislative races, and city council races, and planning boards and these kinds of things that we've done pretty successfully for the last two years... So we have to do the field work, and we have to do it because that's how we're most effective, if we're effective we don't win, if we don't win, everybody's screwed. Because that means bad people are getting into office.

Rather than a one-off comment here or there, the consistent message relayed by organizational leaders, field organizers, and volunteers alike was that field work itself was an effective way to win elections, especially statewide, down-ticket, or more local elections. Beyond that, effectiveness was a norm that also applied to self-

perceptions of individual behavior, in that doing field work well meant an ability to recognize what was effective or efficient and what was not.

Rather than viewing the two versions of efficacy as entirely separate, it is more likely that volunteers and organizers share a similar strategic sense of trying to exert influence and get the most out of their hours involved. All participants share in the sense that field work is a good use of time and can make a difference. More organizers report making a difference as gratifying, however, because they are in a better position to do so. Moreover, the ethos of efficacy and orienting activity towards impact that is set in organizational documents and goals is controlled by organizers. In this sense, their notion of efficacy helps to set the tone for the organization as a whole. Efficacy, while a norm for all, is more of a reality only for some.

Attitudes towards the Party

The third potential point of difference is in the attitudes towards the party. These are broadly separated into two different issues: attitudes about internal democracy, and attitudes about compromise. While I have no direct measure of loyalty towards the party, these two issues do give some indication of how participants thought about the party.

One of the key points in the discussion of activists is the extent to which amateurs were intent on party reform and/or held anti-party sentiments, at least in the beginning. Internal party reform issues did come into some of the interviews, and was a current or issue that was going on whilst I was in the field. However, this conflict was the primary concern only of a relatively small group of volunteers.

These conflicts reflected long-standing attempts at reforming the party to be more internally democratic. In tracing the antecedents of the amateur politician in his study of Democratic Party club politics, James Q. Wilson linked the Populist reform movement with observed distrust of political organizations. The Populists, he explained, “shared a conviction that the cure for democracy was more democracy...

Grass roots control of both parties and government would produce better policies and better leaders, thereby reducing the influence of moneyed interests” (Wilson 1963: 26). While he describes the Progressive movement as more self-consciously about intellectual elites wresting political power from political bosses, the broad agreement that animated early twentieth century party reform had much in common with the mid-century Democratic Party reformers. That reform tradition, which was also noted by Kirkpatrick, can also be found today. However, unlike the earlier skirmishes over party reform, the relative lack of sympathy for the reform movement among party participants I interviewed suggests that it is much less relevant for contemporary participants’ identities.

In one of the localities I conducted interviews and participant observation, some participants were involved in the Democratic Party local organizations or campaigns, and an additional group called the “Progressive Democrats.”⁵³ The Progressive Dems were, as I learned quickly, not a chartered organization of the Democratic Party, and in fact had rumors of several run-ins with party officials over trademark infringement (i.e., using the name ‘Democrats’ in the title of their group without the express permission of the Democratic Party). Because the term ‘progressive’ was increasingly used to talk about politics on the national scene, I asked participants whether they identified themselves as such. While some of these questions elicited answers that referred to the policy preferences and branding within the scope of conflict with Republicans on the national stage, I quickly learned that it also referred to party reformers who identified as ‘progressive’ and came into conflict with individuals within the party organizational leadership at all levels.

In one local committee, the conflict manifested itself between two local groups, ‘the progressives’ and everyone else. In the case where ‘progressive’ was associated with this conflict, participants from both groups were very explicit in explaining this

⁵³ The progressive/netroots movement for party reform has also been a feature of Democratic politics at the national level, including in the 2008 presidential primaries. However, the concern with this movement in terms of curtailing the influence of ‘Washington insiders’ is much more a feature of national party politics than what was observed on the state level. As such, I leave the national conflict/reform movement aside. See Armstrong (2006), Trippi (2006) for more on the national progressive movement.

conflict as one about party reform and intra-party democracy. As one participant explained it

There are conflicts between what they call establishment Democrats and progressive Democrats. Which in many ways revolves around how you define the term 'progressive.' The way I always used to define the word progressive, was basically it being the same as liberal... meaning, on social issues like against the death penalty, pro choice. On economic issues having a fair distribution, or fairer distribution of wealth. Progressive income tax... The Progressive Democrats have somewhat usurped the term progressive to mean something which is focused on process. Outsiders, new people is good [sic], people who have been involved before and insiders is bad, and if you want to change things, you're progressive. Even though, on 90% of the issues the so called I'll say liberals, have the same positions as progressives on issues. They still want to throw out the liberals because they're not new.

While this participant did not define himself as a progressive reformer, he succinctly identified the different meanings and dimensions of 'progressive,' and how it was used locally as a term to identify those participants who were reform minded and wanted to bring in new participants via intra-party democracy. Another participant I interviewed, who identified himself as one of the leaders of the progressive group in that area had a similar description of what the progressive movement, locally, was about. He similarly identified progressive as being about process and wanting to bring new people in, and the conflict with the 'establishment progressives' despite issue agreements. In fact, he described an 'Internal Divisions' committee that was appointed to bring together the 'establishment progressives' and 'reform progressives' to find common ground. The result, he said, was that everyone found they agreed on everything except the Mass Scorecard.

The Scorecard was a system of rating legislators by how closely they voted with the party platform on legislation – essentially, measuring legislators according to how in line they were with the party platform. The sponsors' reasoning behind the Scorecard is that it will hold legislators accountable to their own party, and therefore make the party more internally democratic and accountable - which is largely the same kind of argument put forth by the Populists a century earlier. However, because the party platform is largely a symbolic document for rallying the party and left to the volunteer participants to create with little input from legislators, there is more variation among legislators policy preferences than there is in the policy statements

of the party platform. In the two previous issue conventions (held in off-years), the Mass Scorecard failed to pass and become part of the party's charter and rules.

Despite this report of it being the only area of disagreement, other conflicts erupted and were observed, mostly manifested in meetings regarding changing local city committee rules and regulations. These were essentially struggles for political power within the party city committee. However, even when the conflict manifested itself several times, it only included the same people every time and did not draw other participants in.

Thus while conflict over reform in terms of internal democracy was not absent, there is little evidence that it ever gained traction as an issue by which most participants I interviewed defined themselves. The majority of participants I asked about what progressive is or was either defined it in Democratic-versus-Republican terms, or were averse to identifying themselves as part of or against the reform-progressive identity. For instance, one participant who was familiar with the localized conflict, when asked whether she identified with the progressive or establishment side, sarcastically said "God that's not a totally charged question from the City Committee. I'd love to know people's answers to that one. I'd say both, I mean I don't really care." Similarly, another participant who spoke of the conflict deflected answering the question, simply stating "I don't like labels."

In this sense, it would appear that participants now are engaged in a qualitatively different kind of relationship with party reform. Partly this may be because the issue was largely solved by the McGovern-Fraser reforms which opened up the parties nationally and on a state level to new participants (women, youth, and minorities) and the nomination process to voters. In any case, hostility toward the party organization and/or movement to reform it at the state level did not feature strongly in the accounts of the majority of participants. The few who were primarily concerned with this were all volunteers, but were still a minority of this group.

Knowledge

Finally, as discussed in chapter four, organizers and volunteers both developed a ‘tacit’ knowledge about doing field work that Brante (1990) associates with professionals. It seems clear that this practice-based knowledge is, at least in the case of field work, not exclusive to participants who are solely engaged in full-time organizing work, but instead shared by all participants. In this case, then, ‘expertise’ characterizes volunteer and organizer participants alike.

Table 7.2 summarizes the key characteristics of volunteers and organizers.

Volunteers were usually part time and usually not paid, whilst organizers were usually paid and full time. In part because they spent more time on campaigns, more organizers reported being emotionally involved, or dealing with close emotional engagement with their work. Both volunteers and organizers expressed a mix of reasons, gratifications and meanings from participating, though volunteers were more likely to express beliefs and organizers more likely to express purposive reasons (working on something they can make a difference on). Organizers were also more likely to mention first getting involved as part of a career path, and thus material reasons were more salient at that stage compared to volunteers. The current party conflict engaged neither a great number of volunteers or organizers. Finally, both volunteers and organizers developed a kind of expert practice knowledge through participation, though some organizers also discussed doing participation well in with reference to scientific knowledge. In this configuration, everyone is an expert at something – managing a database, cutting a list, or talking to their next door neighbor. Expertise, while taking different forms for organizers and other campaign staff, applies to organizers *and* volunteers. It is for this reason that organizers are described as professionals and volunteers as experts.

Table 7.2: Key characteristics of volunteers and organizers⁵⁴

Characteristic	Volunteer	Organizer
Full-time/part-time	Part-time	Full-time
Paid/unpaid	Unpaid	Paid
Motives and meanings	Mixed, <i>beliefs</i>	Mixed, <i>material reasons for first involvement</i>
Efficacy	Shared ethos of efficacy	Shared ethos of efficacy; <i>efficacy as gratification</i>
Party conflict	Low relevance	Low relevance
Expertise/knowledge	Local knowledge	Local knowledge, <i>scientific knowledge</i>

Discussion

How do these results compare with the profiles of amateurs and professionals? First, some of the characteristics would be predicted from previous studies; the fact participants expressing a variety of reasons for involvement is familiar, as is the focus on being able to make a difference and doing a job well among the organizers. Familiar, too, is the ‘tacit knowledge’ that Brante discusses – though this was previously only applied to professionals, where here there is a strong case for it applying to all participants. Only the greater emotional involvement organizers compared to volunteers is truly surprising, given the characterization of professionals as more independent and removed from their work.

This may also have important implications for thinking about the long-term sustainability of full time, high intensity participation. What happens to organizers after three or four campaign cycles? Do they eventually transition into less demanding forms of participation, or do they drop out all together? Among the participants I interviewed, I did find those who were currently involved in the intense mode of staff organizers, as well as ones who had that experience and had moved on to other, more senior roles – as informal advisors, as elected officials, or as staff members of non-party political organizations or non-profits. In this latter role participants were obviously not directly employed in the narrow sense of being in politics, but circulated among a similar group of participants, and stayed in a network

⁵⁴ Characteristics only relevant to one group shown in italics

of colleagues and fellow former organizers and staffers. Finally, I did speak with two participants who had been full time staff members, and were now involved on a volunteer basis.

What this leaves unanswered is what happens to those participants who were involved intensely, but have since dropped out. In other words, it is impossible to tell from this study what proportion of participants stay on after an intense period, and what proportion stops participating altogether. In Fisher's account of grassroots canvassers and employees from the 2004 election cycle, only a small proportion of participants who were involved in 2004 were still working in the PIRGs in 2005. It is a fairly damning retention rate, and as she rightly points out, raises questions about what the implications are for democracy if participants stop being involved in politics altogether. In order to really address the question of what the long-term impact is on individuals who previously participated as field work organizers (or any professional role), longitudinal studies will be necessary in the future to determine what the impact of such a kind of participation is on individuals.

In the end, perhaps the most important difference between the volunteers and organizers studied here and the amateur and professional profiles is the most obvious. The volunteers and organizers interviewed are doing the same kind of work: field work. The crucial difference in the transition from the mass party to the service party, for Aldrich, was also part and parcel of the changes in what was being done by whom. Amateurs (and the machine politics participants before them) worked to get the vote out, talk to friends and neighbors, and organize party events for the community. Professionals made ads for radio or television and helped candidates through polling or other specialist services. In hindsight, one can reasonably imagine that the paths of professionals and amateurs would rarely cross, if at all. Organizers and volunteers, on the other hand, work in the same division of the campaign, towards the same goals of contacting, convincing, and turning out votes, contacted each other on the phone, and attended the same events. To be sure, participants did not describe these interactions as conflict free, and there were differences over tactics, understandings of what was happening or what was important. But organizers and volunteers all tried to pull in the same direction.

This difference speaks to what is probably a new model of party organization. In this new model, full time staff organizers and part time volunteers work in the same organizations and in the same divisions. Profiles of participants based on professional or amateur status can no longer neatly be linked with one model of party organization or another; instead a new model is needed. Katz and Mair's original article focused on more than just personnel, of course, and the other areas they outline which are not studied here – finance, links to the state, etc – are critical for a fuller understanding of whether a new party organization model is emerging in the US. The research here is all on field work, but developments in other aspects of campaigning such as finance and communication – such as the developments apparent in the 2004 campaign, when Howard Dean used the internet to organize, communicate, and raise money from volunteers – suggest that the combination of professional staff combined with volunteer participation is the new way in which campaign divisions will work. For this new combination of workers, *expertise* may be redefined not as book knowledge or professionalism in the classic sense, but be based on more of the practice knowledge discussed here.

The combination of professional organizers and expert volunteers also has important implications for the role that parties play in civic and political life. Part of the reason, perhaps, that professionals are associated with civic ills is not so much because they replace volunteers in the same jobs, but that they do different jobs in a different kind of organizational model. When Henrik Bang wrote that part of the problem was the professionalization of political participation, he was referring to the “the interlocking of media and NGOs with government, politicians and administrators in the new discursive arenas of governance networks operating within and beyond the state,” (2004: 6); when Crenson and Ginsberg decried and Skocpol warned about the rise of checkbook politics and professional managers what really the problem was the re-organization of interest groups and civic organizations (Crenson and Ginsberg 2002; Skocpol 2003). In other words, people doing things on a full time or professional basis is not the problem per se, it is this fact in a broader re-organization which is troubling for civic engagement. But in the case of organizers and volunteers in field work illustrates that there is nothing inherent in full-time or professional practice of politics which threatens the health of civic engagement, it is how professional staff

are combined with other roles and participants in the broader organization that matters.

Finally, studying both full-time and part-time participation in the same activity and/or organization together may be a fruitful line of enquiry for future studies. First, if the combination of volunteers and full-time organizers in field work is increasingly becoming true in other kinds of political participation, such as in civic groups, lobbying groups, or even other divisions of campaigns (like finance and communications), then there will be more aspects of the relationship between the two groups which may be worthy of study. Do professionals and volunteers find themselves in conflict, and under what circumstances? Are there similar issues of translation between the two groups, or are the ways of knowing more fixed in other instances? If not, why is that the case? What are the power dynamics between the two groups?

Second, what previously appeared to be a characteristic or dimension of political participation may in fact be true for professional or full time participation usually not considered because it in some way does not ‘count’ as political participation. As Nickerson shows in his comparison of volunteer and paid phone banks for GOTV, it is not the voluntary or non-voluntary basis of the phone banks that determines success, but how well trained each group is and how much pressure phone bankers are put under to produce a certain volume of calls (2007). To paraphrase Nickerson, it is the *quality* of the phone bank that is key. Similarly, the results here regarding how participants think about efficacy problematizes the assumption that being effective is exclusively possible for professionals. Rather, in the future it may be worth continuing to as how participants in all roles can be effective, and under what circumstances. What is it about doing something full time that makes participants think they are more effective – is it greater influence over one’s own workplace and the ability to set goals? Is it simply the greater number of hours worked? Studying more kinds of participation can lead to a greater understanding of political participation overall.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis aims to contribute to and support a broader research agenda regarding political participation. Instead of working with a thin rational choice model of participation in collective political action, I present an alternative conception of political participation. By asking about participation in the ways that have been done here, I argue that participation is not just individual, organizationally structured, innate, instrumental and abstract, but collective, networked, learned, meaningful, productive and contextually situated. In this chapter I elaborate on each of these dimensions by summarizing the analysis in the preceding chapters and linking the findings with the contrasting conceptions of participation. I sketch out how these contributions relate to the themes introduced in the first chapter regarding the gap between research on civic and political participation, the issue of party organizational transformation, and the problems with rational choice, as well as potential areas of future research. I finish by reflecting on the research methods and the contribution this thesis makes to interpretative studies in political and social research.

Summary of Key Findings

Participation is not just individual and organizationally structured but collective and networked

As Jane Mansbridge sums up so well, one of the major limitations of rational choice theory is that it assumes people are atomistic individuals (Mansbridge 1995). The problem is that this creates a conceptual blind spot for recognizing how human activity can be fundamentally and irreducibly social, related, and intersubjective. In this sense, political participation is often conceptualized as an endeavor that is rational, goal oriented, and irreducibly individual. A similar conception of organizations is used in the study of parties and political participation as well. Participation is usually studied with respect to participation in just one organization, where the organization is defined by either its structure or function.

In chapter three, I present an alternative which emphasizes how participation is a collective endeavor undertaken by a community of people that share norms, ideas, practices, and ways of doing things, and therefore also presents an alternative image of the organizations in which participation takes place. The chapter starts with the question of *how* participants got involved in campaign participation. Rather than treating this as primarily one about why people get involved in politics and the motivations for doing so, asking about how people get involved in politics provides the opportunity to ask about how participants experience organization through their own accounts of getting involved. Looking at the answers participants gave to the question ‘how did you first get involved?’ some common antecedents and similarities are highlighted. First, as would be expected from previous research, most participants described becoming socialized into their political views and growing political awareness, especially from experiences within families, within an extended network of friends and neighbors, or through school curriculum. Their first collective action participation was most often in a campaign, as either a volunteer or staff member. Campaigns organize divisions according to the tasks they do: media, research, fundraising, candidate support, and field work. It is the last of these divisions which is relevant for the thesis. Within field work, three roles are identified: that of organizer, volunteer, and informal advisor. Organizers tend to be staff and based in the campaign office, while volunteers tend to be based in the neighborhood or community in which they do field work, and informal advisors work with campaign organizers but tend to not be based in the campaign office.

Beyond practicing grassroots politics in these campaign roles, participants also (often later) joined party organizations, including town and ward committees, the state committee, or regional Democratic Party groups. They were also, as a group, often involved in other political organizations and civic organizations, revealing participation spread across a number of organizations. There were some differences by role in terms of these involvements, with organizers less likely to be involved in more than one campaign at a time and more likely to report the importance of school-based influences compared to volunteers. Moreover, while many organizers started off as volunteers, starting off as an organizer and then working as a volunteer was extremely rare among the participants I spoke with.

Participation is learned

If starting participation involves not just beginning to do certain activities but joining a group with habits, norms, and ways of doing things, then participation also involves *learning* these habits, norms, and ways of doing things. However, this process is undertheorized. While the literature on socialization does hint at a process of becoming, most of the research has focused on the acquisition of attitudes and behaviors, especially in the literature on party activism. In chapter four, I present an account of learning to campaign and becoming a ‘good’ canvasser. Drawing from work on learning in organizational studies, I discuss how participants learn, the skills they develop, and the ways of knowing present in field work. By and large participants report learning on the job and from actually doing field work. Organizers in particular described doing an internship that is akin to the concept of legitimate peripheral participation. While some participants did undertake formal training, most did not find it useful as it only taught skills, and not the application of skills in context which is what participants need to know in order to do field work. This learning process was tacit and taken for granted to the extent that participants did usually articulate a process of learning, rather they saw what they did as just the way of doing things. Yet they also developed specific skills for doing field work, and were able to articulate these. Doing field work well involved having good people skills, a strong work ethic, organizational skills, and knowing about the local community and political scene in the communities which they were canvassing. This latter knowledge involved not just knowing the local political customs, but having a sense of the patterns of everyday life in a given place as well as knowing who the local ‘opinion leaders’ were in a community. This knowledge can be understood as a sub-variation of ‘local’ knowledge in that it is specific to a geographically bounded community and practices, and cannot be directly used in other communities.

This learning and doing also reflects different ways of knowing how to do field work. Overall, the practices of both field work volunteers and organizers are similar to the ‘local knowledge’ and situated learning. The knowing and process is tacit, and learning is as often as not kinesthetic in addition to being cognitive and analytical.

Although ‘scientific’ knowledge would seem to be less important for the practice of participation which is largely based on experiential learning, in some cases the language and descriptions of field work by organizers in particular was similar to a rational-scientific approach.

The lists that canvassers use are an organizational product in that they require the input of participants in multiple roles. No one participant is ever making ‘the’ list but together campaign field work organizations produce lists. In this sense they are also repositories of collective learning and knowing. Lists are also boundary objects, and the way in which participants in different roles interact with the list also reveals the different kinds of knowing that are involved. For a volunteer, an account may be rich with detail, shared history, and experiences with specific voters; for organizers the list is a compilation of names, phone numbers, addresses, and voter ID intentions. The former resembles local ways of knowing in that they are contextualized and are not relevant or applicable to voters in other contexts, while the latter is more like ‘scientific’ knowledge in that it is decontextualized, essentialized, and aggregated, lacking the contextual specificity but preferencing a similar generalized kind of knowing. In one sense the any one given voter file contains the same information, but it involves a different kind of knowing for actors in different roles. The difference between the two kinds of knowing is not just of type but of scale.

The implications of the findings from this chapter are relevant for two distinct fields of academic enquiry. First, collective learning and knowing are an important dimension of the practice of participation. These practices are still largely learned by doing, rather than learned through academic studying. To some extent, then, the tensions or problems which can arise through the preferencing of scientific knowledge over local knowledge are less applicable to field work participants, all of whom are involved in situated learning. However, this by no means will always be the case. Already there are two graduate programs in management for political campaigning, which include covering field work. Moreover, organizers are more likely than volunteers to use rational-scientific language to discuss doing field work well. Will field work practice continue to trend in the direction of rational-scientific knowledge for management practices local ways of knowing for volunteering? While

there are good reasons to be skeptical, there is also one additional reason to think that there will always be a place for local knowing, especially with respect to knowing particular communities, in field work. Because knowing a community is important for doing field work well, those campaign field work divisions which overlook this kind of knowing and relating to voters do so at the risk of losing the opportunity to do their work better. The way in which field work continues to develop is open to a number of possibilities.

Second, the discussion in this chapter and especially using the voter ID list as an organizational artifact provides the opportunity to theorize about the relationship between scientific and local ways of knowing. The translation of knowing from local to scientific involves essentializing and decontextualizing. While the practice of preferencing of scientific knowledge over local kinds can lead to misunderstanding or not knowing, on a theoretical level the two are not as far apart. All knowledge, including scientific, was at one point learned and known through experience, and therefore a local way of knowing. Changing that experiential knowledge into academic, general, and rational knowledge is both a process of distillation and transformation. Moving back and forth between the two requires translation, both between members of different communities of practice and members within one community but working in different traditions and ways of knowing. This applies whether the communities in question are practitioners, practitioners in different roles, academics and practitioners, or academics in different research traditions.

Participation is not just instrumental but also meaningful and productive

Of the several components of rational choice theory that frame the study of participation, three are crucial for framing motivation for action. First, as discussed above, rational choice foregrounds people as individuals, which can have the effect of missing that which is not exclusively individual – e.g., intersubjective meanings and motives. Second, the distinction between what counts as civic and what counts as political is difficult to sustain consistently across research in different contexts. By separating ‘political’ reasons from ‘civic’ ones, this conception creates two

categories that are less than the sum of their parts in terms of their explanatory value. Third, conceptualizing effectiveness has always been problematic because the assumption of rational choice theory is that any one person's contribution to achieving collective outcomes is so small as to be insignificant. Yet at the same time many people report making a difference as one of the reasons for their participation. Theoretically, then, researchers should disregard such reports as actually having any relation to the actual participation and course of events, and instead treated as a figment of a participant's psychology. These theoretical problems further translate into a problem of concept validity in empirical research on participation in collective action. While most researchers work from the same set of original texts (namely, the solidary/purposive/material categories), in application they deal with the problems of context, civic and political differences, and efficacy in different ways. This means that though each particular way of categorizing participation may be internally coherent, when viewed across different research studies the specific reasons contribute to different concepts or categories of why individuals participate, undermining the validity of those concepts.

In chapter five I present an alternative approach to understanding and studying motives and meaning. I take a bottom-up approach to dealing with specific reasons participants report and how these fit into categories. Using open-ended questions from the semi-structured interviews, I looked at the answers that participants gave as the rewards and reasons for their participation. These reasons were then clustered together into similar categories. These categories are loosely based on the incentives system but are conceptually different in the way that they approach the main problems outlined above. First, by clustering reasons which were relatively abstract together and reasons that were fairly concrete together, it was possible to distinguish between those reasons for participation relating the actually 'make a difference' with the broader beliefs about why participation mattered. These 'concrete' purposive reasons are different from the purposive categories used in other studies. Second, looking at the more abstract reasons as a group addressed the issues of separating individuals from contexts and civic from political ends. The blind spot in rational choice-based categories that is a result of the focus on instrumentalism misses these beliefs, because they are constructed intersubjectively and are collective in important

ways. Further, the difficult way in which rational choice theory treats effects on outcomes overlooks the ways in which participants *do* attempt to make a difference and think about their actions in strategic ways. By separating out concrete purposive goals from beliefs, the categories here throw both the meaningful and the (learned) ways of acting towards specific ends into clearer relief.

Rational choice theory has also been important for traditional conceptions of how political participants relate to both voters and party elites. In chapter seven I discuss what participation in campaigns produces and how this links to the concerns about uncoupling between ‘lay’ citizens and elites. ‘Linkage’ is traditionally conceived as one of the key functions that parties fulfill in a democracy. It is often researched in a rational choice framework and conceptualized along the lines of an exchange mechanism in which citizens trade influence over the policy making decisions of elites for their votes. Crucially, this conception puts participants in essentially the same framework as voters – that is, both are concerned with influencing policies and elite actors. The only difference is that participants have more resources (time and money) with which to bargain. This leads to questions about the undue influence of participants with different policy preferences from voters over the candidate selection and policy promotion process. While articulating a concept of linkage, this rational choice based model is relatively thin.

In contrast, I argue that participation is productive of a conceptually different ‘thick’ linkage in which participants are not just the same as voters but mediate at the boundaries of campaign organizations and in the spaces between the circles of elite political agents and less engaged citizens. This conception of producing thick linkage is drawn from the accounts of how to do participation well and includes participants’ acts of endorsing candidates to fellow citizens and voters, representing the candidate in social contexts, and translating an abstract person, realm, and (sometimes) set of policy proposals into concrete, immediate, and understandable terms for other voters. All of this is still oriented towards getting votes, but in the process it is productive of a kind of trust between voters and canvassers. This trust is distinct from the concept of social capital, which emphasizes the relations only between citizens and leaves the role of the state and the political realm abstract and different. In contrast, it is the

connecting of civic and political worlds, and the translation of politics from abstract otherness to everyday sensibilities which makes translating, representing and endorsing important.

Such trust is not always built in every single canvassing interaction and situation. The disparaging terms that are attached to astroturfing and 'buying' votes through hired field work or non-localized campaigns is a recognition by participants that it is very possible to have campaign field work without it being grassroots, and a reminder of the relative fragility of such bonds created through canvassing.

Participation is not abstract but situated

Weber's distinction between those who for whom politics as vocation and those for whom it is an avocation is often used as a starting point in studies of participation. While ostensibly about the characteristics of the individuals who participate in politics, the way these distinctions are built into profiles of participants of 'amateurs' or 'professionals' is inextricably linked from the model of organization in which people participate. In this sense, while amateurs and professionals may at first appear to be abstracted ideal types, I argue that they can only be understood along with a sense of the organization in which participants work. In chapter seven, I review some of the literature on amateur and professional typologies of political activists and the relationship between these profiles and models of party organizations. I then go on to present a comparison of the characteristics of the organizers and volunteers discussed throughout the previous chapters.

Organizers do participate on a more full time basis compared to volunteers, and this in turn produces a qualitatively different experience with a campaign than for the volunteers. For campaign organizers, the intensity and long working hours of the campaign created what some described as potential problems in maintaining an emotional separation from their work and the outcome. Rather than independence characterizing their work, then, their experiences were characterized by a stronger emotional intensity compared to volunteers.

Apart from the emotional intensity, organizers reported the same reasons and meanings relating to their participation as volunteers. The differences are in how often different reasons were given by participants in different roles; organizers were much more likely to cite the concrete satisfactions, especially making a difference, compared to volunteers. In this sense the differences in terms of efficacy are along the lines of what would be predicted from previous research, in that efficacy was more of a defining characteristic for organizers than volunteers. However, efficacy also operates as a group norm amongst all participants, as evidenced by descriptions of how volunteers as well as organizers are oriented towards making the 'best use' of their time. Thus while organizers are more likely to report gratification, and probably have more opportunity to make a difference, there was an ethos of efficacy for all participants as well.

In terms of party attitudes, it appears that party reform is much less of a salient issue than it appears in previous research on participation – partially, it would seem, because major party reforms have already taken place. Although increasing internal democracy (especially among those who self-identified as progressive) was important to some volunteers, the majority of participants interviewed were not concerned with internal democratic reforms. This highlights the possibility that attitudes towards party reform are not a static characteristic of a participant's own psyche, but are linked to the present political context and stage of party development.

Taken altogether, these findings relate back to the themes introduced in the first chapter, providing good reason to think that the links between 'political' and 'civic' engagement are much closer, and close in multiple ways, than previous studies would suggest. They also indicate that the Democratic Party underwent a period of transition again during the 2004 and 2006 elections. Finally, the findings contribute to non-rational choice ways of envisioning, describing, and conceptualizing participation as a learned, contextual, and meaningful practice.

The civic-political gap

In chapter one, I linked the separate development of research on political parties and civic organizations to, in the US case, a rise of anti-party sentiment and the development of the progressive movement in the early twentieth century. While Putnam and others have envisions civic participation and organizations as an apolitical phenomenon, Clemens, Skocpol and others have noted how the progressive organizations were not only engaged in the political sphere, but did so as an explicit challenge to the power of machine party politics. Meanwhile, most studies of political participation developed with little attention paid to connections with civic engagement and, by extension, questions of civic decline.

The data and analysis presented in this thesis offers an alternative view to both of those outlined above. First, as discussed in chapter three, party political participation develops from activity in non-party spheres: home, school, and an immediate social network. Moreover, participants were on average members of multiple party, political, *and* civic organizations. From an experiential point of view, then, participants moved between civic and political participation freely.

Civic organizations were not loci of political activity per se, but as explored in chapter seven civic connections (or the attempt to create them) were a crucial component of building trust between voters, campaign workers, and candidates. Done well, practicing grassroots participation necessitated a kind of connection between campaign workers, voters and party elites that is under-theorized in the party literature and brings to the fore the importance of parties for building goods (such as trust) associated with a host of democratic and civic ills. The concept of thick linkage necessitates further research, and could contribute to research on civic participation and health as much as the literature on party politics.

Finally, this research indicates that research on participation in parties and participation in civic engagement could be a fruitful area of cross-pollination. For instance, what is often considered the normative implications of professionalized participation has less to do with the key characteristics of professional participation and more to do with broader trends in how political participation and systems are

organized. The problem with participation that Stoker (2006) criticizes is the replacement of door-to-door contact by volunteers with advertising run by professionals. But this is not about comparing the way that professionals and volunteers do work, but rather two different ways of doing campaigns. A better comparison would be of participation in the same kind of political work that may be of various kinds, i.e. both full time 'professional' and volunteer. In short, rather than separating the study of parties from the study of civic participation, and then subdividing the study of parties into studies of vocation or as an avocation, it could be more productive to study different ways of participating (e.g. full-time/part-time) when that participation involves the same participatory activities (e.g. field work), and then connecting that with broader concerns about civic health. What happens in parties may have important implications for questions about civic decline.

Further, research on parties could equally benefit by addressing some of the same issues developed in civic engagement, as well as some of the insights developed on 'non-traditional' participation. As participation in parties continues to transform, finding the connections between that participation and participation in other new ways could demonstrate common trends or themes. In sum, the gap first noted in *Democracy at Risk* left in the study of civic engagement by the absence of parties appears to be a significant one. In this thesis I have attempted to fill one part of that gap and in so doing point towards the need for more research in the area.

Participation and the Democratic Party in transition circa 2006

This thesis started out by contextualizing the concerns about current party and civic woes within a broader debate about decline and transformation. At the time that this research project started and as evidenced by *Democracy at Risk*, the decline thesis had the weight of a large body of evidence and vocal supporters behind it. Now such arguments seem intuitively dated, and there is healthy interest among academics, think tanks, and government policymakers in a broader civic revival. How could things turn so quickly?

First, as discussed throughout the thesis, there were already many scholars, including Pippa Norris, Russell Dalton, Theda Skocpol, David Marsh and others who have been emphasizing the narrative of change and transformation over decline. So what appears ‘new’ in the latter part of the decade may in fact be a broader recognition of generational and slow, long-term change. Although it is not a longitudinal study, the evidence in this thesis and gathered through research indicates that there are many good reasons to think that 2006 marked a period of transition towards more, and different, civic and political engagement. Rather than coming from individual patterns of participation, however – patterns relayed either by those who have been involved over a longer period of time or those who have just started – what appears most striking is the investment of organizational infrastructures, norms, practices and leadership into the concept that political participation can make a difference and is an important component to winning political campaigns. That is, participatory *organizations* are changing as well. Party representatives put together slides emphasizing how participants can make a difference. Literature communicates that grassroots volunteers are part of the winning strategy. Campaign leaders, field organizers, and volunteers alike describe an ethos of efficacy which permeates and validates the notion that grassroots participation is an integral part of the campaign.

This may result in a greater quantity of participation – more people contributing more hours – and there are also early signs that this participatory impulse is being pushed not just into party organizational structures, but civic initiatives as well.

Deval Patrick, upon becoming Governor of Massachusetts in 2006, established the Office of Civic Engagement in the executive branch; Barack Obama has also (along with his wife, Michelle) emphasized civic and community engagement in early public appearances during the presidential transition of 2008-2009.

However, more immediately, the findings discussed here indicate a transition in how the Democratic Party is organized. Participant ideal type profiles of being a ‘professional’ or an ‘amateur’ no longer fit quite so easily; instead volunteers and full-time staff work in the same divisions and in some cases do the same work; though their experiences in the campaign may be different they are closer than previous research would indicate. Where Broder, Kayden and others emphasized the

relative marginality of grassroots participation in campaigns previously, the evidence here is one of participation which is central to campaign strategies. If Massachusetts in 2006 was indeed the tip of the spear, then it would seem that very few campaign organizations would exclude substantial grassroots participation in the future. As social researchers, this invites further research and reflection on how we might conceptualize a political party not solely as a service organization with ‘auxiliary’ party activists, but one in which networks of grassroots volunteers are a core component.

There is further reason to be interested in the changes in party organization and how participation is practiced, as hinted in chapters six and seven, and that is the question of what happens to all participants after their encounters on the campaign. What happens to voters – do they engage more, trust more, or maintain their same views, ideas, beliefs and activities as before? What of the volunteers who have been in the game for a while, and those who have just started? Finally, what about the field organizers who are, at least initially, emotionally engaged and wrapped up in their campaigns, who learn on the job how to organize, motivate, plan and think about their work? The last question is especially important because early news reports indicate that a number of candidates for state and local offices in Massachusetts and across the country cut their teeth as campaign staff, organizers, and Congressional aides (Cooper 2009). If work and personal identities, concepts about trust and representation, and norms about campaign organizations are formed through practicing everyday participation, it would be fascinating to know how, if at all, these translate into ideas and practices of governance.

Rational Choice Reconsidered

Regarding the concept of rational choice and the findings presented here, there are several important conclusions to draw. First, looking at organization from the perspective of participants provides an alternative image of organization from the instrumental, structural, and functional images provided through the classic texts on party organization and rational choice explanations of participation. Second, viewing

organization from the viewpoint of participants foregrounds a lived context which takes place in a number of organizations but also is constructed by personal networks, contacts, and relationships built up over a period of time. In this sense the participatory context is made up of organizations as structural entities but goes beyond it as well. Looking at participation from the viewpoint of participants foregrounds an image which is best understood as if it were a culture. This image of organization foregrounds the intersubjective, collective and shared. It highlights what participants construct and what can only be recognized in such spaces: meaning, mental models, ways of doing things, tacit assumptions, and norms about the activities. Participation is not just an individual activity which takes place in clearly defined organizations, but has collective dimensions which are created and shared by participants through networks and across numerous campaigns or party entities.

Third, the reconceptualization of the categories of reasons participants give for their activity should have application for other future studies of participation. By using a division of reasons which better reflects the different ways in which participants think about the meaning of their participation, the concepts are more robust, particularly when trying to explain notions of efficacy and the role of beliefs about the good life, in which civic and political ideas are difficult to separate. This should lead to a greater ability to compare and contrast the reasons that participants give in a variety of participatory modes and contexts.

More broadly, in this thesis I present the idea of participation as collective, networked, learned, meaningful, productive and contextually situated. Taken together this is a way of thinking about participation which does not fit in the rational choice framework, but may have more in common with work developed in other social science fields. The wealth of research on practice in organizational studies, and Carol Pateman's work on gender and participation have been touched on only briefly in the previous chapters, but points towards the need for a broader and more coherent development of a concept of political participation which does not just highlight the flaws in rational choice theory, but presents a viable alternative. I have attempted to add to the discussion about what such an alternative could be, drawing on the insights gained in interpretive research and in other social science fields. Clearly, more work

needs to be done in this vein so that we may understand participation not just through a rational lens, but through cultural, contextual, and practice lenses as well.

Reflections on research design

In reading over the conclusions and insights drawn in all the chapters, the importance of the research design is paramount. In particular, the specifics of the case and the adoption of an interpretative approach are important for reflecting on the research findings.

The case for the generalizability of the results from this case was made in chapter two. The case of participation in grassroots campaigning in Massachusetts is an extreme one in that the extent to which the context of participation is independent of and greater than just one campaign or party organization may be stronger here than in other places where there are fewer campaigns to get involved in at the grassroots level. This plethora of organizations made it easier to identify, articulate, and flesh out the concept of a culture and network of participation which extends beyond any one organization, but this may not necessarily be the case in other areas. On the other hand, the increasing ability of campaigns to reach supporters over a broader geographic area through internet-based organizing may mean that this participation across multiple campaign organizations is an increasingly common aspect of participatory experiences in the future, in which case the ‘unusual’ case here is more like the beginning of a broader trend. At the very least, the extent to which the case is unusual is well suited to the research aims of generating theory about the context and concept of participation.

There are, of course, limits in the extent to which the specific findings here can be translated or generalized to participation in different parts of the US, to different parties in the US, and to cross-national comparisons. Where possible, I have used the case study to develop theories about participation which may be useful across different contexts, so that the important generalization is not to a parent population but to the level of theory. The reconceptualization of the categories of reasons which participants describe is done specifically with the purpose of comparison of

participation in different parties or collective organizations, and the concept of thick linkage should similarly highlight the possibility or ways in which political activity feeds into problems identified in civic engagement in different actual contexts.

The use of interpretative methods and approach is important in terms of the way the context of participation was accessed and analyzed, and for recognizing and understanding the beliefs, learning, and norms which were all in some way collectively constructed and known. In particular, adopting a commitment to understanding participants' experiences from their point of view was important in terms of how I conducted my data collection, and, eventually, my conception of what it is that participants do when they are participating. As described in chapter two, snowballing interviews made a commitment to extending the case beyond a few campaign organizations. This changed the way I understood the case. While my original assumption was that participation was organizationally bounded, the ways in which participants shared contacts revealed more about the structure of personal networks and relationships which existed beyond any one organization. The overall result was that the extent to which the context of grassroots participation took place in a network which extended beyond any one campaign or party organization, and therefore was not entirely bounded by them, became much more clear. Had I stuck to the commitment of studying participation within only a few organizations, I would have probably gained other insights but lost the opportunity to understand and explore this extra-organizational context.

Moreover, recognizing what tied participants together more than just shared participation in any one organization or just personal relationships involved uncovering and enquiring about how participation is organized as a culture. This foregrounded the role and importance of shared beliefs, organizational learning, and norms – particularly about efficacy – for participation. For instance, the interpretative approach used in the chapter looking at motivations provided theoretical and analytical tools which did not suffer from the same shortcomings as the research done in traditions which emphasized people as individuals and in no relation to their context. Where incentives systems and rational choice downplays or misses intersubjective aspects of participation, interpretative approaches are better equipped

to address them. Additionally, attention to organizational learning and knowing is non-existent in studies of participation. Yet doing participation does not come out of nowhere. Taking an interpretative approach to learning provides the intellectual resources and grounding for studying learning, and in this respect uncovers a previously overlooked dimension of political participation. In this sense, an interpretative approach is part and parcel of the research questions, methods, process and answers.

Participation involves doing things – talking with neighbors and friends, meeting other participants, convincing voters. By focusing on participation as practice, this thesis also contributes to the growing number of interpretative studies which look at politics and policy as an everyday phenomenon. This shift in emphasis foregrounds the meanings and multiple social worlds that actors bring with them and develop in the practice of politics, problematizes neat relationships between ‘political’ on the one hand and ‘social’ on the other. It breaks down the distinction between elite and lay, or between ordinary citizens and leaders, showing how citizens and lay people may be expert.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Massachusetts Data

DEMOGRAPHICS	
Population, 2006	6.4 million
Population change, 2000 – 2006	1.4%
Non-hispanic white residents	80.0%
Hispanic residents	7.9%
Black residents	6.9%
Asian residents	4.9%
Native American/other residents	1.8%
Foreign-born residents	12.2%
High school graduates	84.8%
College (B.A.) or higher graduates	33.2%

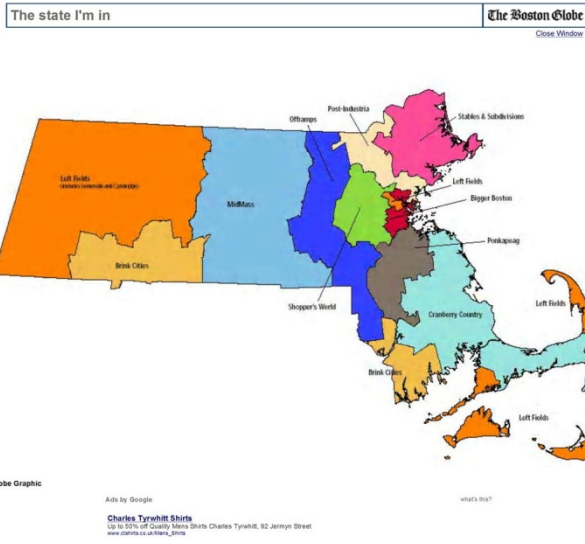
ECONOMIC INDICATORS	
Median Household Income	\$54,417 (19% above national average)
Job growth, 2001-2006	45 th out of 50 states
Jobs in Education and Health Sector	18.4%
Jobs in Trade, Transport, and Utilities Sector	17.6%
Jobs in Business and Professional Services	14.5%

(Source: U.S. Census)

Appendix 2: 10 Political Regions of Massachusetts

The state I'm in - The Boston Globe

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http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2006/06/04/mass_map/

5/21/2008

Source: Dennison 2006

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Organization:⁵⁵ _____

1. How did you first get involved in politics?

CAMPAIGNS

2. How did you first get involved in this campaign?
3. Tell me a little bit about your candidate
4. Why did you pick field/delegate work?
5. Describe your duties with this campaign (repeat for each campaign involved in):
 - o Hours per week/ or month
 - o Training(s) – any institutes, degrees, retreat weekend, just experience?
 - o Paid or unpaid
 - o Are there other organizations you work with regularly?
 - o Name three people you work with most closely:
6. What do you think is the dominant issue on this race?
7. Is there any issue in particular that's really important to *you*, personally, in this race?
8. In general, what is the single most important component of the whole apparatus for winning this campaign?
9. What does it take to be good in field work?
10. What's the function of fieldwork – why does it matter?
11. What do you do differently now that you have experience in field work?
12. (if have worked as both volunteer and staff in the past): How did those volunteer/staff experiences compare?

⁵⁵ I noted the primary campaign or organization they were involved in, while the interview covered multiple organizational contexts.

13. When you first started on this race, did you have any particular goals in mind? Something that you wanted to get out of this experience?
14. Is there anyone you would not work for politically? Or would avoid working for again?⁵⁶
15. Most rewarding part of your time here? Least rewarding?
16. One of the things people often talk about with Democrats is the fact that we have a big tent. Is that a conception that works for you, when you think about the DP?
 - a. Advantages to that?
 - b. Disadvantages?
17. Would you consider yourself a progressive? [Liberal?]⁵⁷

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

1. Are there any political groups you're involved with outside the campaign?
 - What purpose
 - Why that group
 - How they first got involved
2. Have you ever attended a meeting of the Democratic Party or one of its committees? Yes/no – follow up
 - Which committees?
 - How often?
3. Political groups donated money to?
4. Would you describe yourself as someone who works for the Democratic nominee every year no matter who the candidate is, or you've worked some but not others? (and why)
5. Why get involved in both, or just one?
6. Is there any crossover between the multiple groups, in terms of membership?
7. Crossover of purpose?

NON-POLITICAL CIVIC ACTIVITY

8. Are there any non-political civic groups you're involved in?
 - School committee, parents group, church, Amnesty International, Elks, etc.
9. Is there any connection between the political and civic groups for you?
 - Membership

⁵⁶ Q's 13 and 14 were dropped after initial 10 interviews

⁵⁷ This was a sensitive question, and was asked in a more balanced format. The phrase I used when asking this question was, "so would you consider yourself a progressive, or a liberal, or really neither?" If they answered either progressive or liberal, a follow up question was asked asking if they distinguished between the two. In the end, the data from this question was not included in the analysis.

- Purpose
10. Are there other charities you've donated money to in the past year?
- Which
11. Rank the organizations in order of personal importance to you. Both today and long term.
12. Would you ever want to see the non-political purposes or causes addressed in the political arena?
13. At the end of the day, why stay involved? What's it [participation] mean to you?

Finally, if you're interested in receiving the results and copies of any published material from this research, please provide your mailing address and email address below. Your information (including all answers) will be kept confidential and all information will not be shared with anyone other than the primary researcher. Both email and regular mail addresses are optional.

Name:

Address 1:

Address 2:

City, State, and Zip:

Email address:

Appendix 4: Scholarly articles and incentives systems categories

Original Article	Miller and Jennings 1986 ⁵⁸	Clark and Wilson 1961	Conway and Feigert 1968	Verba, Schlozman, Brady 1995	Whitely Seyd and Richardson 1994	McCulloch 1990	Finkel and Opp 1991
Incentive typology (categories)	Policy-Oriented, Partisanship, Social, Personal-Career	Purposive, solidary, material	Ideological, other impersonal [purposive], social contacts [social], other personal reasons [material]	Collective outcomes; selective civic, social, material gratifications	Collective Benefits; Outcome, Process, Ideological Incentives; Altruism; Social Norms; Expressive Index	Economic, Social, Ideological, Cultural, Non-allocatable	Party Identification; Instrumental & normative public goods; selective material, social network, & psychological rewards
Typology source	Clark and Wilson 1961	original	Clark and Wilson 1961	Wilson 1962	Olson 1965; May 1973	Olson 1965	Olson 1965, Muller and Opp 1986
I want the chance to further my job or career	Personal Career	Material	Other personal reasons	Selective material	Selective Outcomes	-	selective material
Campaigns are exciting	Social		Social	Social	Process	non-allocatable	selective psychological
Chance to be with people I enjoy/ friendships	Social	Social	Social	Social	Process	-	selective social
Chance to influence policy	Policy-oriented	Purposive	Ideological	Collective outcomes	Collective Benefits	ideological	instrumental PG
Duty as a citizen/ civic responsibility	Partisanship	[-]	Other Impersonal	Civic gratifications	Altruistic	cultural	instrumental PG
Politics is part of my way of life	Partisanship		Other personal reasons	[-] ⁵⁹	[-]	[-]	[-]
Attached to party	Partisanship	[-]	Other Impersonal	[-]	Expressive	non-allocatable	party attachment

⁵⁸ See also Dodson 1990, Costatini and Valenti 1996, Costatini and King 1983 utilizing same framework

⁵⁹ But note: VSB include the category of "I do my share," which may be the closest equivalent and it is considered a selective civic gratification

