PACKAGING DEMOCRACY:
HOW CAMPAIGN PROFESSIONALS REPRODUCE POLITICAL INEQUALITY

By

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the specialized production of electoral politics. I examine the social origins, career paths and perspectives of the hired professionals who craft the strategies, messages, and images of national-level campaigns. These "politicos" compete for positions within an ever-changing landscape of consulting firms, party committees, and short-lived campaign organizations. They have a profound influence both on the content of American politics and on politicians themselves, yet they have never been studied, other than anecdotally.

This is the first comprehensive study of the social structure, dispositions, and strategies of the full array of workers—not only consultants, but also campaign staff and advisors—who produce national-level political campaigns. I find that the structure and culture of professional campaign work magnify existing inequalities in democratic participation, both inside and outside the field of political production. Among political operatives, entry-level jobs on national campaigns are the best and often only viable starting point for a path to higher-level work, but these positions are nearly impossible to access for those without political connections and/or financial resources. This creates a first filter of selection and vector of inequality according to class, ethnicity, gender and age. Next, because any individual's contribution to an electoral outcome is nearly unknowable (as my interviewees attested), an individual rises in this field not because her campaigns win or lose, but by the extent to which candidates and other "politicos" believe she has the skills and the "political instincts" to succeed. Hiring practices are informal and referral-based, which further limits access to these powerful positions for those without the effective capitals or dispositions. As a result, the top levels of the campaign profession have even less ethnic and gender diversity than does Congress.

This inequality of access to positions in the space of political production combines with other features of internal electoral organization to produce campaign strategies disliked by both scholars concerned with good democratic practice and potential voters. For example, many of my interviewees talked about the incentives for "cookie-cutter campaigning"—reproducing strategies, tactics, and even slogans across elections. In Chapter 4, I use multiple correspondence analysis to show that the "top" consultants—those who work on the greatest numbers of high-level races and are in a position to hire, judge, mentor and socialize newer campaign professionals—are the most likely to find it acceptable to use misleading tactics or to deliberately decrease turnout, and are the least worried about these tactics' affects on voter cynicism. These kinds of campaign content, along with the sense that politics is "too complicated" or that politicians are not concerned with "regular people," have been shown in other studies to lower political participation.

In this dissertation, I bring together Bourdieu's and others' analyses of cultural fields with political science and sociology, approaching the world of electoral politics as a "field of cultural production" rather than only as a site of competition over interests or a simple vehicle for domination. People have practical, tacit relations to political messages and images, just as they do with any other kind of cultural product. These dispositions are formed through family, schooling, and work, and are thus deeply tied to class, gender, race,

ethnicity/nationality and other principles of classification and forms of inequality. This is true for the people who produce political content (such as skilled professionals of electoral campaigns) as well as for potential voters. This research, then, focuses on the "supply side" of electoral politics, the intersection between the field of cultural production and the political field which I will call the "field of political production." Examining this field of political production—the trajectories, contests, categorizations, and desires of the producers who design, direct and distribute campaign materials—contributes to understanding how and why campaign specialists make the choices they do.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> Indeed, nothing is less natural than the mode of thought and action demanded by participation in the political field; like the religious, artistic or scientific habitus, the habitus of the politician depends on a special training. […] But it is also and above all that sort of initiation, with its ordeals and rites of passage, which tends to inculcate the practical mastery of the immanent logic of the political field and to impose a de facto submission to the values, hierarchies and censorship mechanisms inherent in this field, or in the specific form that the constraints and control mechanisms of the field assume within each political party.
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> […] to gain a complete understanding of the political discourses that are on offer in the market at a given moment […], we would have to analyze the entire process of production of the professionals of ideological production [...].
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> Pierre Bourdieu, "Political Representation—Elements for a Theory of the Political Field," page 176 in Language and Symbolic Power, 1991.

Why Study Campaign Professionals?

Every two years, when national elections come around, Americans are inundated with political messages: they see campaign ads on TV and online, hear speeches and more ads on the radio, get countless flyers in the mail, receive robo-calls and live calls, and may even find a canvasser knocking on our doors. In 2012, over three million political ads for national-level races were shown on just one of those media: national television (Fowler and Ridout 2013). This barrage of persuasive content constitutes not only contests over which parties and individuals will hold the power of elected offices; it is also the bulk the political content many Americans consume, and the livelihood of a small but rapidly growing cadre of specialists in electoral production.

This dissertation is a comprehensive study of the people who decide whether, how, when, and what campaigns will communicate to potential voters. I embarked on this project because I wanted to understand the forces shaping the content of political campaigns in this country. I suspected that the ways politicians and vote-choices are presented to people, especially during elections, when candidates are communicating with as many possible voters people as possible, might be part of why citizens in the United States participate in politics relatively little, dislike politics so much, and often think of politics as something "other people" do (Croteau 1995; Eliasoph 1998; Laurison 2013). So I set out to figure out who was "behind" campaigns' contacts with potential voters: who crafts the messages voters hear? Who decides which voters to contact, and how? This research did not and could not discover a clear causal relationship between campaign practices and citizen engagement; instead, it simply reveals the inner workings of the production of the political campaigns which seek to connect candidates with potential voters.

"Campaign professionals" or specialists in electoral production (what to call this category of social actors is itself an important and unresolved question, which I discuss below)—are the people responsible the disposition of the millions of dollars contemporary

national campaigns cost. They craft the advertisements, images, events, flyers, phone-calls and speeches attempting to move potential voters, and determine which citizens will be targeted and eventually contacted by the campaign in the first place. Although candidates may have final say, the vast majority of activities campaigns engage in are decided upon, crafted, and implemented by professional campaign staff and consultants hired specifically for that purpose, not by the person running for an office or his immediate entourage. These "politicos," as they often call themselves, shape a candidate's message, her self-presentation, and her daily schedule throughout the campaign. In short, the role they play in elections, and thus in the communication between potential voters and current and future holders of the power of elected offices, is hard to overstate. And yet, while the effects of campaigns have been studied extensively (e.g. Ansolabehere et al. 1994; Brady and Johnston 2006; Iyengar and Simon 2000), there is remarkably little research on the people who create political products. This is akin (to use a type of analogy popular in politics) to trying to understand professional football solely through an analysis of the plays, without studying or talking to players or coaches. If one only wants to know what kinds of "plays" lead to wins or losses, then studying only the campaigns' output make sense. If, however, the goal is to understand how and why the "game" of politics is played as it is, then the backgrounds, trajectories, perspectives, and beliefs of the people crafting and executing those "plays" are an essential piece of any analytic puzzle.

Over the past 45 years, electoral campaigns have become increasingly rationalized, formalized, and professionalized. Where campaigning used to be an occasional activity for people whose main careers were in other fields, it is now a full-time, year-round occupation for thousands of Americans. Based on lists of campaign staff, consultants, advisors, and chairs published by various observers, I identified 4,901 individuals who played some role in a Presidential or Senate race from 2004 to 2008, at least 2,453 of whom who worked full time in a strategic or decision-making capacity on one of these national-level campaigns[1]. The fact that a there are so many people whose careers center around national campaigns is the result of a number of historical shifts. Political parties' power and organization changed dramatically during the course of the twentieth century, with parties losing much of their influence over both candidates' campaigns and politicians' decisions. (Many scholars place the nadir of party influence in the late 1970s, after which the parties resumed exerting more control, although through less direct means than before.) The amount of money spent on campaigns and elections by candidates, parties, and partisan organizations has also increased rapidly over this period.

One corollary of these changes has been the rise of professional political consultants, a development that stimulated the publication of a number of books, articles, and screeds in both the popular and scholarly presses decrying these profit-motivated "interlopers" in a political world previously dominated by party organizations. Since that initial reaction to political consultants, political scientists as well as journalists have examined the business of political consulting, and political consultants' role in the democratic process, in a more even-handed manner. However, political consultants are only type of campaign specialist, and the work studying even this subset of campaign professionals has not answered crucial questions

[1] this is probably an underestimate as it was difficult to find the full lists of campaign staff for competitive senate races, and it does not include most of those who worked for party committees or partisan organizations, nor anyone who worked on other state and local races or in entry-level positions on national races

about the relationship between political producers and the form and content of political campaigns. Most consultants were campaign staff before becoming consultants, and there are many people who work as advisers, communication directors, field organizers, campaign managers, and in other key strategic positions in campaigns who are not consultants. All of these people shape the strategies and messages of national-level political campaigns. Understanding how campaigns work illuminates crucial aspects of American democracy that have up not yet been subject to focused scholarly investigation.

This project, then, uses an array of methodological approaches to understand how campaigns are designed and steered (Chapter 3), who is creating campaign content and strategy and how they gain those positions (Chapter 4), the relationship between background, income, and campaign philosophies (Chapter 5), and how campaign specialists understand their work and career trajectories (Chapter 6). In the remainder of this introduction, I define the terms I will be using; give an overview of the history of campaign work in this country; discuss the existing literature on campaigns and campaign work, and introduce my theoretical approach.

Constructing the Object of Analysis

Prior to, or at least in the process of, finding out who is doing this work and how they do it, it is necessary to make some analytical distinctions, and to figure out how to refer to this set of agents and their world. Most broadly, I approached this study interested in understanding the microcosm of specialists who make their living in national politics, but are not politicians—the whole of the staffs who organize and facilitate the actions of politicians. But within that broad set, it is the people who work on, around, or with political campaigns, rather than those who work solely in the offices of elected officials, who are the key intermediaries between the politicians who seek to hold national offices and the people whom they would represent. But not all individuals paid by campaigns fill this role to the same degree; this work is most concerned with the people who are in positions to shape the political products that reach voters. These political producers focused on the task of elections are an essential object of study not only because politicians rely on them in order to win and hold onto their seats, but even more because they create much of the content of American politics, and nearly all the content of elections, seen by voters. (There is some mediation by political reporters and pundits, but many of the decisions made by political strategists result in direct contact with potential voters—ads, phone calls, door knocks, mailers, emails, and so on.) My object of analysis, then, consists of the broad set of people who regularly work for Presidential and contested Senate races; I focus within that group on those who get hired to design and steer electoral campaigns, the key decision-makers in the upper echelons of campaign organization hierarchies.

But this is an operationalization without a concept; it leaves open the questions of whether this is a coherent group of any sort and how they should be defined and discussed. The census classification of 509 occupations includes no mention of campaign workers or political consultants[2], so that is not a place to find a definition; it also gives some indication that this may not be a fully developed occupation or field. Scholars have studied people whose occupation is political consultant and sought to define that term,

[2] http://www.census.gov/cps/files/Occupation%20Codes.pdf

but largely ignored their origins in campaign work and non-consultant campaign decision-makers more broadly.

Since the 1970s there have been growing signs of the formalization of campaign work as an occupation. By 2011, twenty-three colleges and universities offered degrees, majors, or certificates in "campaign management" or "applied politics." The American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC) boasts over 1,100 members, and there are at least two trade magazines, numerous newsletters and listservs, websites, and trainings dedicated to serving, informing, and/or profiting from this group (e.g. Politico, Democratic GAIN, *Campaigns & Elections* Magazine). But while there is a fairly well-accepted name for a subset of the group of interest ("political consultants"), there is not a single analytic term or name for the entirety of this set of people. So the first task for this study is to choose and define the terms to be used.

There is certainly awareness among these political practitioners that they are members of something like a group, occupation or profession. Within the world of campaign specialists, I mostly heard people describe themselves and their colleagues as "politicos;" this term included not just campaign staff and consultants, but also party staff, people working at some kinds of partisan organizations, and sometimes also the staff of elected officials and political journalists (the latter two groups, of course, are not part of my main set). The chief divisions my interviewees talked about had little to do with what *kind* of organization was the primary or current employer, and much more to do with positions within campaign hierarchies.

The extant literature on the work of crafting political campaigns focuses primarily on political consultants, those individuals who contract out their services, often to multiple campaigns each election cycle, within a particular specialty. But this focus is too narrow: there are many people working in key positions on national-level campaigns who are not consultants; they are (I have found) usually serial campaign staffers, who move from campaign to campaign, as well as through other, related kinds of work for parties and elected officials. But more than that, there are a number of problems with treating consultants as a wholly separate type of political professional. Consultants and other strategic campaign professionals are different elements of essentially the same set, and there is a lot of movement between these categories. In every major campaign, especially presidential campaigns, there are staff who may have (or have had) consulting firms, but who work on the campaign in a full-time, non-consultant capacity. A nationally representative study of consultants, which I will turn to in more detail in Chapter 4, found that 55% of senior consultants had started in politics working on campaigns, 53% had worked for parties at some point and 45% had worked for an elected official; nearly 80% had done at least one of these things. Most people I interviewed had held at least two of these roles as well, and/or worked for partisan issue-advocacy groups or for unions. Of the people in my dataset with more than a few cycles of political work in their career histories, at least a third had worked for party committees and/or for elected officials.

A number of people I interviewed talked about consulting as a way to get a slightly more sustainable lifestyle in this line of work, and earn more money; for them—especially those who were considering or just embarking on setting up their own consulting shop—consulting is a natural next step after a number of years in campaigns, not a new and different line of work. "Hanging out a shingle" as a consultant is a fairly common move for campaign professionals who have gained enough experience "in the trenches." One

consultant told me how he likes to provide mentoring to the campaign staff he was working with, since they probably hoped to move into his role someday and he had benefitted from others' mentoring himself.

There are of course some differences between campaign staff and consultants: consultants are generally entrepreneurs, with their own staff, who can work on many campaigns each cycle, while also having corporate or issue-group clients; while campaign staff work intensely on one race at a time. But mostly, the distinction between consultants and other kinds of staffers is artificial or at least irrelevant to much campaign work: some consultants are not key decision makers, and some key decision-makers on campaigns are not consultants at all, and so have been completely ignored by studies which treat "political professional" as synonymous with "campaign consultant." This study, then, examines both the universe of staffers working on national-level campaigns and the overlapping but by no means identical universe of partners and employees of consulting shops with national-level clients.

I use "campaign professional" in the title because it most straightforwardly evokes the key characteristics of the people I am studying: they work on campaigns, and they are respected experts in their roles. It is a good provisional shorthand for referring to the set of people who create the content and strategy of national campaigns, but it is not satisfactory as an analytic category. First, "professional," indicates a whole set of characteristics that are not necessarily applicable to campaign specialists, even at the highest levels; they are not actually professionals by most definitions (there is no licensing or even required schooling or training, among other distinctions), although there are certainly moves to professionalize the industry and scholarly interest in studying the question of professionalism in politics (Gibson and Römmele 2009; Grossmann 2009b; Mancini 1999). Asking about the extent or degree of professionalization of campaign work, however, is putting the cart of categorization before the horse of understanding: whether or not hired election strategists are "professional" by some rigorous definition of the term is much less important to me than understanding how they come to their work and how and why they carry it out as they do.

The most accurate way to describe the group I am studying is that they are "specialists in electoral production"—a term constructed by analogy with Bourdieu's characterization of agents in the religious field. They are "specialists" because I am focusing on those with the skills, knowledge, and experience to gain positions with decision-making authority on national campaigns; these are by and large people who have already worked in lesser capacities and/or on smaller campaigns, usually consistently within a particular type of campaign work (field organizing or communications, for example). "Electoral production" because that is the work at the heart of campaigns—producing and disseminating messages, images, and narratives designed to affect electoral outcomes. I will also use the terms "campaign industry workers" or "campaign workers" when I want to include in my discussion those at the early stages of their careers, or in the lower parts of campaign hierarchies. I also refer to the people I study simply as "political producers," in part to highlight their similarities to producers of other forms of culture. I will occasionally use both "campaign professionals" and "political producers" in place of "specialists in electoral production" as that phrase, while apt, is rather unwieldy.

To define these terms more explicitly, then: a campaign industry worker is anyone who makes a majority of their income, on a consistent basis, from working in or for or with

political campaigns. I say "majority" instead of all because many of these people also are in and out of jobs with elected officials, or work in public affairs/consulting jobs which also have issue groups and/or corporations as clients. I say "on a consistent basis" to exclude those people who may have worked on a campaign once or twice but now do other kinds of work, or who come into campaigns briefly as advisors or chairs but whose main occupation is in some other line of work. A "specialist in electoral production" is any campaign worker whose positions tend to involve decisions bearing on overall campaign strategy, or on material that large groups of prospective voters might see and hear. In addition to people working as staff and consultants to campaigns, this ought ideally to include people working for political party organizations, partisan groups, and "Super PACs" who essentially work as a third arm of campaigns; there is a good deal of crossover between these sorts of organizations and campaigns; one prominent example is Karl Rove, who ran George W. Bush's campaigns in 2000 and 2004, and ran a notoriously unsuccessful "super PAC" in favor of Romney in 2012.

Whether or not a given person in a particular campaign or organization is actually making these sorts of decisions is an empirical question, and often a site of some contention among campaign workers and between types of campaign work. Campaign managers, pollsters, and communications people are generally accepted as purveyors of strategic advice, while web designers, specialists in other aspects of "new media," and providers of campaign phone calls sit on the boundary between "mere" providers of technical services and key participants in campaign strategy.

There are, however, three categories of worker which, while fitting the broader definition of "campaign workers," are clearly located outside the boundaries of the group of people influencing the content of campaigns: fundraisers, technical vendors, and low-level staffers. First, although fundraising is clearly essential to any campaign, and a top donor or fundraiser my have some input into campaign strategy or message at early stages, fundraisers are by definition not primarily concerned with campaign message or strategy; the main fruits of their involvement in campaigns do not reach voters. Second, I am not particularly interested in political "vendors" who provide purely technical services such as designing and administering software for campaigns, administering websites or other internet services, or providing campaign paraphernalia such as yard signs and t-shirts, etc. So, someone whose work is exclusively designing software for use in campaigns is probably not a specialist in electoral production although they operate in the same field. Third, there are a variety of staffers in any campaign who are generally not in a position to make or be part of making "strategic" decisions, i.e. decisions whose outcomes will be affect more than the handful of voters with whom those staffers might directly interact. One example would be a low-level field staffer, whose main job is knocking on doors and/or organizing volunteers to knock on doors. While field operations are a campaign's most direct method of contact with voters, the decisions about which voters to contact and the scripts for what to say if someone opens the door are generally crafted by those higher up within the campaign. Another example would be the assortment of administrative/operations staff any larger campaign or other organization might need, such as those handling accounting, working in the legal department, managing computer acquisition and maintenance.

That said, all these sets of people are included in my database; low-level field staffers and those in some other kinds of lower-level positions, if they stay in campaign work, often move into more strategic positions; and it is not always possible to tell from a position title

such as fundraiser or even software designer the capacity in which its occupant is contributing to a campaign.

This group I am calling "specialists in electoral production"—people who make their living as part of the strategic decision-making in national campaigns—comprises four different objects of study in prior research: political consultants (who have been studied relatively extensively, although not on the questions I am asking), party staff (who have been included in some studies), campaign staffers, and staff at partisan organizations. These last two groups, to my knowledge, have not been studied much at all; the effects of their organizations have been objects of research, but not the actual people doing the work and making the decisions (but see Skinner, Masket, and Dulio 2012). Although campaigns, parties, consulting firms, and partisan organizations play different formal roles in electoral politics, the strategic campaign professionals who staff them move back and forth—and up and through—these roles fairly frequently.

Campaign Studies

Most studies of campaigns focus on the campaigns' output and outcomes—the content of political messages (usually TV ads) and their effects on both vote choice and perceptions of democracy. The bulk of these messages, of course, are not what either scholars or voters consider desirable: they are often negative, misleading, and/or uninformative (e.g. Maisel, West, and Clifton 2007). These sorts of messages increase cynicism about government and politics (Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner 2007; Pinkleton, Um, and Austin 2002), and may also decrease turnout (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, and Simon 1999; Ansolabehere et al. 1994). The scholarly consensus, further, is that most campaign communications (and most campaigns, for that matter) have little, if any, lasting effects; that is, they rarely change many voters' minds or determine election outcomes (Gerber et al. 2011; Iyengar and Simon 2000; Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner 2007) (but see Brader 2005; Franz and Ridout 2010).

Why, then, do campaigns continue to communicate with voters in ways that research indicates are neither appealing to nor particularly effective for their target audience? Political science, oddly enough, has not done much to answer this question. Most studies of campaigns focus on candidates' backgrounds, the effects of campaign tactics, or explanations of electoral outcomes, rather than on the producers and production of campaign content; they seek to understand the finished product without understanding the people and processes creating it. There are thousands of people who make their careers as staff and consultants on national campaigns (see chapter 2), working as pollsters, speechwriters, spokespeople, advertising producers, field organizers, web designers, fundraisers, and more. They, and generally not the candidates themselves, make the key decisions about what campaigns will say, to whom, and when. These campaign professionals, then, play key roles in American politics, producing much of the political content experienced by ordinary Americans.

The few works that do consider the people behind campaigns tends to assume that campaign strategists are simply trying to maximize their chances of winning, or possibly to maximize their income (e.g. Rosenbloom 1973; Sabato 1981), and have thus has largely ignored the occupational and field contexts within which campaign professionals operate Further, almost all studies of campaign decision-makers (e.g. Dulio 2004; Thurber and Nelson 2000) use only quantitative, forced-choice questions, and include only political

consultants rather than the entire spectrum of people who work full time in political campaigns (for partial exceptions, see Grossmann 2009a, 2009b; Mahler 2006, 2011)[3]. These approaches are effective for answering questions about the characteristics or survey responses of political consultants when compared with the general population or with other groups within politics, but are generally inadequate to the task I set for this project: understanding why and how national-level campaigns produce the kinds of content they do. In order to answer those questions, I believe it is necessary to analyze the as much of the population of specialists in electoral production as possible, without preconceived expectations about what motivates them or influences their work.

How I approach them: Bourdieu, cultural production

The assumptions generally made by those who study campaigns and their effects are reasonable if you believe that all actors across context are rationally trying to maximize their chances of desired outcomes—in the case of campaigns, these are generally thought to be either income or wins (which facilitate future income). But rational pursuit of those goals is not sufficient to explain how campaign professionals work, and in fact makes the disjuncture between research on campaign effects and actual practice somewhat of a mystery. However, what people want out of a situation, and how they understand it, is an empirical question to be answered, not a clear pre-given.

Individual desires, goals, and ways of understanding the world are neither rational and universal nor purely random and idiosyncratic, but are shaped by people's social positions and the fields within which they operate. People have practical, tacit relations to political messages and images, just as they do with any other kind of cultural product. These dispositions are formed through family, schooling, and work, and are thus deeply tied to class, gender, race, ethnicity/nationality and other principles of classification and forms of inequality. This is true for the people who produce political content (such as skilled professionals of electoral campaigns) as well as for potential voters. The analytical framework provided by Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. 1992; 1991a) can help make sense of how specialists in electoral production create campaign outputs.

Field, capitals, habitus, and social space are conceptual tools designed to bring together the subjective and the structural aspects of social reality. Bourdieu's extensive work on politics was largely based on observations of France and interviews with French citizens (e.g. 1998; 1991b, 1999, 2005); however, with a few exceptions (Gaxie 1978; Harrits et al. 2010; Herbst 1992; Swartz 2006; Wacquant 2004, 2005), his theoretical approach has not been applied to the analysis of politics, especially in the United States. I will offer a brief review of the relevant elements of Bourdieu's work here.

For Bourdieu, there are four primary types of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Capital in general is "accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form)" which can be traded for some benefit or advantage (2001, 241). Bourdieu's work seeks to show the ways tastes, mannerisms, connections, possessions, authority, ease, and other things that are often seen merely as personal attributes can

[3] Grossman's work is on the "business" and "professionalization" of political consulting; he argues that consulting is not yet, but may become, a profession, and shows that, while there are "inefficiencies" in the market for political consultants, it is generally in their interest to serve their clients well rather than to simply try to maximize income earned per race. Mahler describes the intensity and "sensuality" of campaign work.

function as capital because they work to confer advantages and reproduce social inequalities. Quantities and distributions of capital will impact the influence an agent or group of agents is able to wield in the political field.

In Bourdieu's conceptual scheme, economic capital includes income and wealth, social capital means having productive ties with social groups or other individuals (not simply generalized trust or number of friends), cultural capital includes education and knowledge, and symbolic capital is the ability to bestow interactions with legitimacy or official sanction. The distribution of capitals in turn defines the axes of social space, and this topography of "class" differences corresponds in large part to political differences.

Habitus is Bourdieu's term for the non-conscious ways individuals from particular locations in—and trajectories through—social space engage with and make sense of the world around them. Thinking about human action through the concept of habitus forces one to see the ways social action and perception are often non-conscious and informed by an agent's history and current position. Agents with different volumes and structures of capital and different trajectories will see the same cultural object (i.e. a piece of art, or a political ad) or social opportunity (a party, a job opening) in very different ways, and the differences in the categories they use to understand these things are part of what generates differences in their actions and reactions with regards to specific pieces of art, parties, or job openings. Habitus is not a fixed attribute but can evolve and change, and is shaped in adulthood largely through the work world. This is not to say, though, that habitus is completely flexible; some entrants into the field of politics will have backgrounds which equip them with a habitus more readily adaptable to the vicissitudes of political work; others, for whom the work may appeal in theory, will find it distasteful or find that they are ill-suited to it.

All this matters for individuals' life chances, their tastes and consumption practices, and their paths into a job or a career. But the key concept for understanding the world of political (and other kinds of) production is the field. Field analysis requires researchers to consider the positions and trajectories of the people with power inside the field, the location of the field with respect to the field of power, and the relation of the field to the rest of social space. In any field, struggles within the field as well as the classed trajectories of the dominant actors in the field are likely to be important in determining the particular products developed by producers in that field. For a product or a claim to be considered truly political (or literary, or academic, or religious) and for it to have effects within the field, it generally must be created by someone recognized as "competent" by the standards of the field. Thus, a painting created by someone outside the artistic field is unlikely to receive much notice or garner many reactions by "true artists"; similarly, campaign professionals tend to be dismissive of strategy suggestions from amateurs or even outside experts (such as, for example, bloggers or political scientists).

For Bourdieu, politics is a field of symbolic production, similar in many ways to the fields of literary or artistic production, as well as to the religious and academic fields (1991a). The "players" in the political field are various kinds of political professionals: politicians, campaign and office staff, pundits, political action committees, party staffs, political scientists, political reporters and others whose professional lives center around politics. Although elected officials' continued power rests ultimately on winning elections, their ability to do so and their relative power (as well as the power of non-elected political professionals) have at least as much to do with the outcomes of struggles within the field as

they do with the will of the voters. These struggles may be over particular positions, policy stances, legitimacy or the legitimate means of conferring legitimacy, or for the favor of particular donors or power brokers, but whatever the content of these struggles they are usually not transparent to those outside the field. It is the job of political producers to translate (or obfuscate) these struggles into communications with voters—party positions, speeches, commercials, and so on—and in doing so they bring their positions in within-field struggles, along with their knowledge and beliefs about effective strategies for mobilizing voters.

When Bourdieu wrote about the political field (1998; 1984, chapter 8, 1991b, 1999), his analyses focused on politicians' actions and individual citizens' responses, without explicit attention to specialists in electoral production whose work is in large part as disseminators of the messages politicians wish to disperse to the public. Most observers trace the expansion of the campaign industry, and of the size and cost of campaigns, to the 1970s and 1980s in the US (Johnson 2001; Medvic 2001; Sabato 1981; Strother 2003) ; these effects were generally seen later in other countries if at all, and were probably less pronounced and less studied in the France which Bourdieu was writing about. So his descriptions of the operations of politics can serve as a starting point, but only a partial set of tools, for understanding political production in the US context. The relationship between democratic politics—who wins elections, and how they govern—and the citizens of a democracy cannot be understood fully without attention to the work of campaign professionals. Their work is largely a form of cultural production, creating events, images, and movies for live consumption as well as print, television, radio and internet dissemination.

Just as politicians' actions must be understood in the context of their position and aspirations in the political field, and artists' creations in terms of the cultural field and their subfield within it, political *producers'* actions take place within the part of the political field where campaign operatives and consultants compete with one another for positions and influence. Looking at work on other forms of cultural production, then, should facilitate understanding this aspect of the work of specialists in electoral production. To understand why campaigns make the decisions they do about content, I turn to the literature on cultural production, both from Pierre Bourdieu (1983, 1993, 1996a) and the "production of culture" perspective (Hirsch 1972, 2000; Peterson and Anand 2004). These approaches, among many other contributions, highlight two key aspects of cultural production. The first is that cultural objects (by which I mean simply any object whose primary value is located in its informational or aesthetic content rather than in its functional use[4]) are created by individuals embedded in organizations and fields which have their own standards, values, and criteria for career advancement. What is valued or considered good or high-quality within a particular field may have little or nothing to do with what pleases (most) outsiders. This is made abundantly clear in the relations between artists and their various patrons described in various sections of *The Rules of Art* (1996a) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), for example when "pure" artists hold "bourgeois" consumers in contempt, and position themselves in opposition to those who produce for the wealthy or for the masses. If political production is itself a field or becoming a field, then campaign materials are likely to

[4] i.e., washing machines are not primarily cultural objects; books, art, news programs and campaign communications are.

be judged, among professionals, by criteria other than objective effectiveness, let alone democratic virtue.

The second insight from studies of cultural production is that cultural producers (not just writers or artists, but all those involved in selecting, curating, and promoting cultural objects), especially those producing for a "mass" audience, are almost always working amidst a great deal of uncertainty about which particular book, TV show, or movie will be a "hit" with those inside or outside the field (Bielby and Bielby 1994; Faulkner and Anderson 1987). Actors within fields, develop different types of strategies for dealing with this uncertainty, depending in part on the structure of the field, the costs of production, and their particular position: some publishing houses instituted quotas for editors in hopes that a publishing *enough* books would increase the odds that *one* or more would be successful (Coser, Kadushin, and Powell 1982); another strategy is simply trying to repeat past successes with small innovations, as has been observed in the TV field (Gitlin 2000) as well as the literary one (Escarpit and Pick 1971).

The questions for this project put in Bourdieu's terms, then, are: first, to what extent can the actions and outputs of campaign professionals be characterized as taking place within a specific field? And, if the concept of field is indeed useful for understanding this set of actors and their actions, do the doxa (taken-for-granted beliefs and knowledge), structure, and struggles for position within this part of the political field structure not only the advancement of campaign operatives at the elite levels, but also the political products, experiences, and messages available to potential voters?

In what follows, I lay out the unfolding of the main arguments of the thesis. In Chapter 3, "In the Foxholes," I sketch the structure of the electoral sector of the American political field, including a description of how campaigning works and the key strategic positions in campaign design and direction, and a discussion of two of the most salient features of campaign work for those who do it: the intensity of the experience, and the desire to be "at the table," in the "inner circle," or the "war room" for campaign decision-making (to use three favorite expressions of participants).

Next, in Chapter 4: "The Making and Makeup of Political Producers," I examine how one becomes a specialist in electoral production, chart the social origins and career trajectories of my interviewees, and report about how people get started in campaign work. Even the lowest-level jobs in politics require some combination of political connections, a privileged background, political appetite and perseverance. Many of my interviewees pointed out that, unlike formalized professions such as engineering or medicine, there is no bureaucratic and credentialed path from college to work in campaigns. Becoming a national-level campaign decision-maker generally requires a term as a low-status apprentice, either volunteering or being paid practically nothing. These positions are rarely advertised, and so are very difficult to access for those without existing connections to campaign work. In addition to little or no pay, these positions frequently require interstate moves and end on election day with no guarantee of further employment; this effectively necessitates external financial resources.

I turn to my dataset to compare the makeup of the field with my interviewees' perceptions of it. I first describe the composition and characteristics of the population of individuals who have had key decision-making positions in national-level political campaigns. These national campaign professionals are far more white (85% of campaign staff and 94% of consultants), male (64% of campaign staff and 76% of consultants), and privileged (46%

of campaign staff for whom I have this information went to a highly-selective college, versus 14% of all college attendees) as the population or even the voting population as a whole; the ranks of the most influential campaign operatives (as indicated by their high-level positions in the most competitive 2004 and/or 2008 primary campaigns) are as white and male as the 111th Congress. In other words, not only are our political representatives not particularly similar to their constituencies, the key people advising them are even less so.

Chapter 5 provides a map of the space of campaign production specialists. Although my original dataset of career biographies is the most comprehensive compilation of information about all sorts of campaign operatives' backgrounds and trajectories, I was able to gather no data on incomes and necessarily incomplete data on educational attainment. Income and education are two key social differentiators, and no study of an occupational field would be complete without them. To remedy this gap, I draw on the largest and most comprehensive study of any portion of the field of political production: the 1999 Survey of Political Consultants conducted by political scientists at American University (Thurber, Nelson, and Dulio 1999). This data allows me to detect what kinds of skills and attributes contribute to success in political consulting, identify important oppositions in the field, and see how the views consultants express about campaigns and politics correspond to their position in the field.

I use multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) to draw out the structure of this segment of the field of electoral production and its location relative to other fields. The MCA reveals an organization of political consultants similar to that of many fields of symbolic/cultural production, with a first axis of field-specific capital or indications of success (years in politics, income from consulting, number of races) and a second axis that describes an opposition between a heteronomous pole where personnel are exchanged with corporations and lobbying and public relations firms, and an autonomous pole where influential connections are with political power holders. Regression analyses show that those who are most successful (in terms of money earned and numbers of national races worked on) in political consulting are likely to have started their careers in politics in campaigns (rather than for consulting firms), started younger, and to have worked for elected officials; remarkably, it also shows little or no effect of greater education on success. Finally, supplemental variables analysis in MCA shows that consultants at the top of the field express far more comfort with ethically questionable campaign tactics, and far less faith in politicians or the press, than those newer entrants and less successful consultants in the dominated part of the space. The implications of these findings are two-fold: first, the space between the views of campaign ethics held by scholars and citizens, and those held by top practitioners indicates that electoral production is a somewhat autonomous field, whose values are not simple reflections of those found in other parts of the social world. Second, it calls into question some previous conclusions from this dataset, which were based on the average responses to ethical issues across consultants in all positions, and thus missed the fact that the most successful (and thus, likely, most influential) consultants are the most willing to stretch the truth and to "go negative."

In Chapter 6: "The Campaign According to 'Politicos'" I describe how specialists in electoral campaign design and production understand their work, and argue that the structure and culture of work in campaigns are in part responsible for the prevalence of campaign tactics considered undesirable by both citizens and scholars, and the difficulty with which findings from social science research enter into campaign strategies. I conducted

interviews with both Republicans and Democrats, from pollsters and chief advisers to direct mail producers and opposition researchers, at all levels of seniority. These interviews indicated that that upward mobility in field of electoral production is primarily determined by connections and personal impressions sifted through the lens of shared categories—in direct violation of the meritocratic ideals also professed by campaigners. Although one might expect it to be easy to judge campaign professionals' quality by the proportion of races they win or lose, my interviewees almost uniformly believed that it is quite rare for campaign tactics to determine an electoral outcome; further, even in cases where campaign strategy might make a crucial difference, it is difficult to know whether any given individual who worked on a campaign contributed to any particular tactic or decision.

My interviewees, in other words, were keenly aware that they lack objective criteria for judging individuals' or strategies' effectiveness, yet they have to evaluate both to do their jobs. In order to do so, they rely on what many called "political instincts"; this is the folk term for the practical sense specific to that universe: these are largely tacit norms that reward familiar messages and commanding self-presentation. Further, they believe that while it is hard to know for certain who contributed to a "good" campaign move, being responsible for a "risky" approach that fails can seriously hurt and even derail a career. This, combined with informal, connections-based hiring practices, makes political campaigning the quintessential "old boys' network," disadvantaging female politicos as well as anyone does not occupy a dominant position in the space, who has not developed broad political connections or an ability to appear authoritative and decisive at all times. These factors work together to encourage the replication of campaign strategies and tactics which are too often repetitious and disconnected from an understanding of the research on which voters can be mobilized and what messages are most effective.

I conclude that the space of specialists in electoral production has the hallmarks of a nascent field: it has its own standards and categories of judgment, it has a near-monopoly on the production of a set of cultural objects (campaign messages), and it is accessible only to those who enter through a fairly narrow—if not formally codified or institutionalized—path. Understanding the nature of the field of political production shows that campaign professionals do not work in a social vacuum, motivated only by winning or earning. Instead, they create campaign content and make strategic decisions among the taken-for-granted beliefs about good campaigning of their peers and mentors, in the context of their struggles not just to win elections, but to build and maintain reputations for themselves as reliable political insiders. This has important consequences for the form and content of campaigns, and thus for American Democracy more broadly.

The organization of the field of national campaign professionals promotes political inequality through two mechanisms. First, it restricts access to these influential positions so that only the most advantaged have a reasonable chance of succeeding as campaign professionals, despite the declarations of meritocracy made by political producers themselves. Second, because of this and because of the nature of the assessment of campaign activities, campaigns tend to recycle strategies which have been shown to restrict or depress participation and fuel further political disaffection. Although this project was not intended to ascertain a causal link between campaign practices and participation outcomes, it does expose some of the hidden forces behind the creation of campaign messages and practices that are deemed deleterious to democracy.

Chapter 2: Data and Methods

In this chapter, I present the wide array of data collected for this project and detail the methods used to analyze it. My data have two primary advantages over extant research. First, my data collection has been uniquely broad in scope. While most studies of the personnel of campaigns have focused only on political consultants, I have included not only political consultants, but also the campaign staff who make key decisions, the lower-level staff who may be on their way to those strategic positions, *and* the chairs, committee-members and advisers who also contribute to campaigns' strategy and effectiveness. Further, while most studies concentrate on a subset or sample of the space of campaign workers, I have compiled a dataset that includes every individual I could identify who worked on a national campaign in any capacity during two Presidential cycles and a set of Senate races.

Second, while most studies rely on *either* quantitative or qualitative research, I not only compiled a large original dataset, I also conducted extensive qualitative research. I held in-depth interviews with 57 specialists in electoral production over two visits to Washington, D.C., was a participant-observer for four all-consuming months on a Presidential campaign, and attended hours of trainings and conferences for political producers. I also draw on aa variety of secondary sources, including a national, random-sample survey of political consultants.

Below, I discuss each of my data sources—the "politicos" dataset, my interviews and participant observation, and the secondary sources I compiled—and the methods used to code and analyze them, in more detail.

"Politicos" Dataset

The "politicos" dataset contains information about the career paths, demographics, and positions of people working in national campaigns in three election cycles. My research assistants and I collected information on every full-time staffer, consultant, campaign chair, committee member, and adviser involved in any capacity in the National 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections, including the primary and general Presidential campaigns, contested Senate races in 2006, and all national political consulting firms. This group includes not only the specialists in electoral production at the center of my analytic interest, but also the lower-level campaign staff who may be on their way to joining that group. Using publicly available data from news clippings, LinkedIn.com, and websites dedicated to tracking political staffers and expenditures[5], the database includes the full names and position(s) within the 2003-2004, 2005-2006, and/or 2007-2008 election cycles for each of 4,901 unique individuals in the dataset. We looked for race, gender, age, and education (both highest degree achieved and names of schools attended and types of degrees granted) for each of those 4,901 people. Further, we collected detailed career histories wherever possible for everyone who worked in a strategic decision-making capacity at the state-wide, regional (multi-state) or national level. To my knowledge, this is the first comprehensive descriptive statistical picture of the universe of national campaign staff and consultants.

Everything in the database is public information, mostly found on the internet. To analyze campaign staffers, a team of research assistants and I began by pulling information from a website hosted by George Washington University which lists campaign staff

[5] Including the Democracy in Action project at George Washington University (http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eaction/2008/about.html) and www.opensecrets.org.

positions and biographies for all presidential campaigns for 2004 and 2008[6]. We transformed these into spreadsheets, then searched the internet for confirmation of the GWU source as well as for information about each individual beyond that listed at the GWU site.

Gender was coded based on subjects' names and pronouns used about them in articles and biographic sketches. Because most articles and biographies do not mention race, especially when the subject is white, race was most often coded phenotypically from photos where they could be found. Race and gender were left missing in the database when no information could be found or when the photo or name could not be confidently coded. Coding race phenotypically presents challenges; my research assistants were understandably reluctant to make guesses based on photographs. However, this should work well enough for our purposes: although observers' categorizations of others' race and ethnicity do not always match subjects' identities (Saperstein 2006), there is generally a high level of correspondence (Hirschman 2004).

There are a few other drawbacks to using publicly available information: primarily, the rate of missing data is quite high. Of the 4,901 individuals we were able to identify, we were able to find information on educational attainment for 43%, assign a racial/ethnic categorization for 44%, approximate an age for 33%, and determine gender for 97%. We did somewhat better with the 2,453 individuals in national-level decision-making roles, both because they were more likely to have significant online presences and because we concentrated more of our research efforts on this group (see Table 1).

[Table 1 about here]

This much missing data is clearly not ideal, especially if there is an unanalyzed systematic bias in the data. There are a few ways in which this might be the case, none of which present insurmountable problems. First, the distribution of missing data overall is biased in a direction which largely helps the analysis: the higher the profile of an individual's campaign work, the easier it is to find information about him or her. Since the focus of this study is on high-level campaign workers, this bias is not much of a hindrance to analysis, though it does warrant keeping in mind. Second, a certain form of social desirability bias may lead those who went to prestigious colleges and universities to be more likely to publish the name of their undergraduate institution than others; this likely biases my estimates of the selectivity of "politicos" colleges slightly upwards, but because almost everyone with a LinkedIn page includes their college, and so much of our data comes from LinkedIn pages, I believe this bias should be fairly small. We likely somewhat under-counted men as most of the names which were ambiguous (e.g. Chris and Pat) are more likely to be used by men than women, and we probably under-counted white people for reasons described above; both of these likely make estimates presented below of the disproportionate percentages of whites and men in the field somewhat conservative.

To collect information on campaign consultants, we used *Campaigns & Elections* magazine's listing of the win/loss record of consulting firms, and then looked up each of those firms' websites and collected the biographies of their partners and staff. Firms were only included if their clientele included at least one Senate or Presidential race, or at least three House of Representatives races in at least two different states, or if they were hired by

[6] http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/cands08txt.html; http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/mccain/mccainorg.html; http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/obama/obamaorg.html, etc.

party committees through "independent expenditures." This part of the final database has a more even distribution of missing data within records, as biographies posted on political consulting firms' websites tend to have similar degrees of content detail for all levels of staff at the firm. There is, however, again a bias towards including only those in the higher echelons of the profession, as not all firms include biographies of their lower-level staff.

Consultants were coded into three categories—founders/partners, senior associates and directors, and junior associates and production staff—based on their titles. They were also coded according to the type of service their firm offers, a coding scheme which parallels, though is not identical with, the scheme for departments within campaigns. Finally, we tallied the total number of races their firm handled in 2008 and the highest level campaign their firm worked on (Presidential, Senate, or Congressional).

To code the educational institutions political professionals attended, I used a dataset provided to me by Steven Brint at UC Riverside and his Colleges and Universities 2000 project. Every college and university in the United States is associated with many of its institutional characteristics, including its score on Barron's selectivity index. While Baron's normally ranks 1 as most selective and 7 as least, the scores are inverted in the dataset and in the tables for easier interpretation.

Consultants and campaign staff positions were coded for their level in the campaign hierarchy on a scale of 1 to 7 (see Table 2), their role (honorary titles versus paid staff, consultants, and advisers), and their campaign department or specialty (see Table 3).

[Tables 2 and 3 about here]

Participant Observation

In the summer of 2008 I began making contacts with the Obama campaign volunteers in about getting involved. By August I had a volunteer job as one of a number of office staff in a new local office in a non-competitive state. Although I was originally only assigned to work a few days a week, I came in five days a week for at least 6 hours a day at first, and increased my time in the office steadily over the course of the late summer and fall, until I was working, along with the paid staff, around-the-clock during the last week of the campaign. I informed the paid staff person for the office that I was volunteering both as a way of beginning my dissertation research and because I genuinely wanted to help elect Barack Obama; I took notes wherever possible but as the fall wore on my focus shifted to simply doing my campaign tasks, and note-taking tended to fall by the way side. The experience was an incredibly useful orientation to campaign structure and culture; although I was near the bottom of the campaign hierarchy, I believe I gained a good sense of many of the key features of campaign work.

In addition, I attended over 60 hours of trainings and conferences for activists wanting to move into campaign work, current campaign staff, and consultants. These were held by *Campaigns and Elections* magazine, the American Association of Political Consultants, and two Democratic/progressive organizations in New York, California, and Washington, D.C. I recorded many of the public sessions of these conferences, took notes, and introduced myself to people I hoped to interview. The conferences and campaign experience provided me with an in-depth introduction to the field of electoral production, and serve as context for my understanding of the data I gathered in other ways. I discuss my experience gaining a foothold in a campaign in more detail in Chapter 3.

Interviews

In fall of 2009 and the summer of 2010, I conducted in-person, semi-structured interviews with 57 national-level specialists in electoral production: people who had worked on or for Presidential campaigns or contested Senate races between 2004 and 2008, with a senior enough role that they were involved in making some of the decisions about campaign strategy, messaging, ads, images, or outreach.

I contacted potential interviewees using a mix of my own personal and professional connections, introducing myself to panelists at conferences, cold emails, and snowball sampling; I stopped conducting new interviews after I had talked to people in every career stage (from new entrants to semi-retired veterans of campaigns going back to 1964), every specialty (polling, communications, media, fundraising, direct mail, targeting, research, scheduling & advance [event planning] and field [voter contact]), and across both parties.

I first conducted 3 pilot interviews with people I worked with on the 2008 presidential campaign, then asked them (and everyone else I could think of, from my father-in-law to grad school colleagues to my pre-grad-school boss) for connections to high-level political operatives. I interviewed most of the people generated from these contacts, then turned to snowball-sampling and cold-contacting. I generated lists of potential cold-contact interviewees from two sources: *Campaigns and Elections* (formerly known as *Politics*) magazine's "Rising Star" awards, given to around 30 young politicos each year; and my own original "politicos" dataset described above. Among people for whom I could find an email address or phone number, I selected people to contact based on whether they represented a part of the field (based on their time in politics, specialty, and/or party) that was under-represented in my contacts and interviews up to that point. I conducted interviews in two waves: a first group in August and September 2009, and the remainder in June and July of 2010. All but 5 interviews were conducted in person; informants were located in California (5), Washington DC and its suburbs (45), New York City (4), and two other Mid-Atlantic states (3). Interviews ranged from 20 minutes to over 2 hours; most were between 45 and 60 minutes.

My interviewees were somewhat unbalanced in terms of party (23 were Republicans and 34 were Democrats), but otherwise were demographically fairly representative of the universe of full-time campaign specialists. Interviewees ranged in age from 24 to 67; most were in their 30s or 40s with a median age of 36. I interviewed 40 men and 17 women, which represents a about the same proportion of women as are in the field overall (67% of strategic decision-makers in my dataset are men); all but four of my interviewees where white, which is a somewhat lower proportion than campaign decision-makers generally (84% of in my dataset).

Interviewees were all guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity; I assured them that I would only describe them in any published materials in non-identifiable ways. Many interviewees were quite concerned with this issue, as they are used to dealing with journalists in heated campaign contests. I explained at the beginning of each interview that I am not a reporter and that my goal was simply to understand how the world of campaigns works. I followed a semi-structured interview schedule, with two primary topic areas. I started with general questions about how people become successful in the world of political campaigns, and followed up with specific prompts about people they thought were particularly good or bad and why, how they had made hiring decisions if they had been in positions to do so, and what they thought made for the most effective or best campaign strategies, with specific emphasis on their specialty. In the last third or so of the interview, I shifted topics and asked about my interviewees' particular background and trajectory. I ended each interview by asking if there was anything I had not covered that they wanted me to know, and then asking for suggestions for other people to interview.

I prepared for each interview by finding all the published information I could about each of my subjects, and used that to select areas to focus on based on their experiences and expertise, as well as to make clear in the interview that I had done my homework.

I started each interview, after the informal exchanges, by explaining the human subjects consent form, and using that as an opportunity to distinguish my aims from those of journalists talking to campaign operatives. I said something like "this document explains all the things I promise to do to protect your anonymity; nothing you say will be linked to you in any way in my dissertation or anything I might manage to publish in a sociology journal; I am just trying to understand how this world works. I hope you will feel free to be honest with me in your opinions; if you are uncomfortable saying something on 'tape' I am happy to turn off the voice recorder at any point. Also, I hope you will let me know if a question I'm asking seems irrelevant or contains wrong assumptions."

While I came to Washington DC with a schedule of interview questions, I quickly shifted to simply bringing a topic-checklist with me, modified the night before the interview (since I was generally doing two to four interviews each day) based on the amount of time I'd have and the biography and specialty of the interviewee. I generally started by saying something like "I'm trying to get a sense of what makes someone good at this, and how does one become a [someone who does work like you]. So, my first question is what, in general, makes someone good at this?"

From there, I tried to cover as many as possible of the following topics:

Good/Successful
- Differences between being good vs. being successful vs. winning campaigns
- How reputations are built.
- More detail on success/being good—examples of ppl who are good?
- What makes those people good/successful?
- How do you know?
- Could someone be successful but not good or vice-versa?
Not so good:
- someone who's not so good or just average? (no name needed)
- how can you tell?
Skills:
- Did you have these skills when you started?
- How does one acquire them?
- What are the mistakes newcomers make?
- What do you make of/are these useful: conferences, trainings, things like the Graduate School of Political Management?
- Why do you do this work, what do you like and dislike about it?
- Walk me through how you figure out a strategy, or a particular piece.
Hierarchy:
- Is there a hierarchy of types of consultants or staffers? Are people in some kinds of work more serious or smarter than those in others?
- How does your type of work fit in, get taken seriously, stack up against

other types of political work?
How do you decide candidates/clients?
- Does the chance of winning impact people's decision to work as for a politician or not, how about you?
- How have you decided which race/person to work for? Or gotten your next client?
Your Bio:
- When did you become interested in politics and how?
- How did you come to be involved in the first campaign? (And from there…?)
- Were your parents/family political? What did they do?
- What kinds of work/jobs could you move into, what kinds of jobs in politics are not accessible/would be hard to get for you?
Future
- If you get your dream career, where will you end up, or pass through?
- Would you ever set up your own consulting shop? Would you rather stay or go back/on to campaigning? for whom? Stay in this v. other areas?
Follow-ups:
- Anything important I didn't ask about?
- any contacts for me?

Whenever possible, I took notes after each interview, either orally (by talking to the voice recorder on my phone as I walked down the street) or manually (on my computer or my phone). I tried to answer each of the following questions/prompts I wrote for myself:

- describe office or meeting place
- were they late, canceled, rescheduled, etc.
- what were they wearing
- Blackberry? iPhone? Other tech?
- what did they look like—hairstyle, makeup or no on women, etc.
- speech style, notes about how they talked
- any contacts offered (these I noted right away, and contacted ASAP)
- anything funny or noteworthy they said, any new analytic thoughts, etc.

Interviews as well as recordings of the conferences were transcribed by either myself, a professional transcriptionist, or undergraduate research assistants. We deleted most instances of "um," "like" and other verbal tics and fillers from the transcripts; I also edited quotations for clarity when they are presented below.

I used a mix of inductive and deductive coding in Atlas.ti to analyze my interviews and observations. I began by simply coding interview topics: descriptions of good or bad campaign operatives, good or bad strategy, different stages in career trajectories, etc. As themes emerged, I began coding instances of these themes, such as the ambivalence around

how or whether campaigns matter, descriptions of "political instincts," the subjective nature of the creative process in campaigns, and mentions of "cookie cutter" campaigning and risk-aversion among politicos.

These interviews inform the bulk of this dissertation: I draw on them in Chapters 3, 4, and 6.

Secondary Data Sources

In addition to my own original data collection, I also relied on an assortment of secondary data sources. I make the most extensive use of a dataset designed by Dulio, Thurber, and Nelson, conducted at the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University and funded by the Pew Charitable trusts, as part of the "Improving Campaign Conduct" grant (Thurber, Nelson, and Dulio 1999). This is the best available dataset for answering questions concerning the field of political consultants; more recent surveys have had much smaller Ns (Grossmann 2009a) or not asked about income at all (Dittmar n.d.). The research team on this survey first identified 2,587 principals and senior associates in consulting firms, then randomly selected respondents to interview. Those selected for calls were only interviewed if they were active in campaigns *and* if their firm contributed strategic or creative rather than primarily technical services. This included consultants who specialized in general consulting (which ranges from offering comprehensive strategic and messaging advice to essentially managing campaigns), polling, media (creating and placing TV and radio ads), fundraising, direct mail (creating and sending printed pieces), research (either data management or research on the opposing candidate), or field operations (managing face-to-face contact with constituents). The sample should be representative of principal and senior associate political consultants overall, except that people who only provided services such as phoning or web design were excluded. I focus my analysis on the 402 consultants in the study who reported working on at least one Presidential, Senate, Gubernatorial, or Congressional race in the three election cycles preceding the survey (1994, 1996, and 1998), excluding the 103 who had only worked on races at lower levels of government. Chapter 5 is based entirely on data from this survey.

In order to make comparisons between the universe of campaign specialists and other elite occupations (in Chapter 3), I pulled statistics on the gender, racial, and educational makeup of various professions and occupational groups from a number of sources. First, I made use of the General Social Survey, a long-running, nationally-representative survey run by the National Opinion Research Center and funded by the National Science Foundation (T. W. Smith et al. 2012). I also used data from the Congressional Research Service (Amer and Manning 2008), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011), and the American Bar Association (Chambliss and Profession 2004).

Multiple Methods

Combining the dataset, these interviews, my participation in campaign trainings, and my fall volunteering as a Deputy Regional Field Director, offers a comprehensive, multisided view of how the world of campaign workers, and especially of specialists in electoral production, operates.

Table 1: Non-Missing Data by Campaign Role

	N	Gender	Racial/ Ethnic Cate-gorization	Degree Data	Age Est-imate	Average number of missing categories (out of 4)
All Individuals	4901	95.4%	43.5%	43.1%	33.4%	1.85
State & National Decision-Makers	2453	96.5%	53.6%	53.2%	33.7%	1.63
Lower-Level and Local Staff	1,350	93.7%	25.9%	25.9%	35.0%	2.19
Mid-Level, State and National Staff	1,232	93.7%	42.3%	45.8%	32.3%	1.86
Top-Level State and National Staff	1,194	98.7%	59.5%	61.0%	39.5%	1.41
Consultants	413	91.0%	51.6%	33.7%	14.5%	2.09
Chairs, Advisers, Committee Members	762	96.1%	42.4%	47.4%	39.4%	1.75

Note: figures in columns 2, 3, 4, and 5 are the percentage of individuals in the dataset for whom we were able to find information; column 6 gives the average number of demographic indicators for which information was *not* found for people in each category.

Table 2: Coding for Campaign Level

CAMPAIGN LEVEL	*How it was Coded*
1	Campaign Managers: whoever is ultimately in charge of the campaign at that level.
2	Deputy campaign managers, and others who have big overall responsibilities beyond specific departments.
3	Department directors of major departments, (e.g. Communications Director, Field Director, Director of Scheduling & Advance)
4	Deputy department directors (e.g. Deputy Communications Director), and directors of sub-departments such as New Media Director (usually under the Director of Communications) or Grassroots Director (usually under a Field Director).
5	Key department staff: everyone who is not a 1, 2, 3, or 4 but is in a position to make decisions about the course and content of the campaign, such as Speechwriter and Press Secretary.
6	Lower level department staff, such as Assistant Speechwriter.
7	Lowest level department staff—general assistants, administrators, other junior people who may not be involved with the central strategy or operations of the campaign in any way.

Note: Campaign levels are designed to roughly correspond to the number of levels above a given position in the campaign hierarchy. They are assigned *within* geographic levels, so both a national campaign manager *and* each individual state director is a "1."

Table 3: Coding for Campaign Department

DEPARTMENT	***How it was Coded***
Management	folks at the top of the page with no specific department—campaign manager, deputy campaign manager, and the like
Political	Anything called political, outreach, etc. Also "constituencies" and "coalitions."
Communications	Usually the biggest department; even if there are sub-departments, anything "press" "media" "advertising" "spokesman" etc. goes here.
Field	Usually called field.
Operations	Titles such as chief operating officer, counsel, compliance.
Finance	Usually called either finance or fundraising.
Scheduling & Advance	Sometimes two departments, treat as one.
Policy	Most of these are usually advisers, not regular staff.
Data	Anything called data, voter file, list.
Interns & Volunteers	People who *are* interns or volunteers. Not regular staff.
Internet & New Media	These may be under communications, but should get a separate department headings.
IT	Information technology—people who do the tech part of new media or databases etc—may not be very many; only include if the role is a technical, rather than strategic.
Advisers	Advisers with no specified department/specialty ("communications adviser" should go under "communications")
Chairs	Chairs and commitee-members with no specified department
Consultants	Consultants with no specified department/specialty
Research	Usually called research.
Polling	Usually consultants.

Table 4: Pseudonymous Initials and Characteristics of Interviewees

Pseudo-initials	Party	Approx. Age	Gender	Interview Conducted
ADN	D	30	M	in-person
BEA	R	30	M	in-person
BEM	R	35	M	in-person
BLB	D	65	M	phone
BOT	D	45	M	in-person
BRS	D	30	F	in-person
CAM	D	35	M	in-person
CHM	D	35	F	in-person
COP	D	45	F	in-person
DAJ	D	35	M	in-person
DEP	D	55	M	in-person
DID	R	35	M	in-person
EYJ	D	40	M	in-person
FAS	R	30	F	in-person
FLE	D	35	M	in-person
GED	D	45	M	in-person
GEJ	R	30	M	in-person
GRJ	D	30	F	in-person
GUJ	D	45	M	in-person
HAK	R	30	F	in-person
HAT	R	30	M	in-person
HEB	R	65	M	in-person
HOJ	D	35	M	in-person
HOR	R	65	M	in-person
HUS	R	35	F	in-person
IPM	D	35	M	in-person
JAR	D	55	M	phone
JOR	D	30	F	in-person
KAD	D	30	M	in-person
KEJ	R	30	F	in-person
LEA	D	35	F	phone
LEJ	D	35	M	in-person

Table 2 Continued

Pseudo- initials	Party	Approx. Age	Gender	Interview Conducted
LUJ	R	35	M	in-person
LUK	R	30	M	in-person
MAC	R	30	M	in-person
MAK	R	45	M	in-person
NEM	D	40	M	phone
OLB	R	30	M	in-person
POT	D	65	M	in-person
QUM	R	30	F	in-person
RET	R	50	M	in-person
ROD	D	40	F	in-person
ROT	D	35	M	in-person
RUC	R	40	M	in-person
SAC	D	60	M	in-person
SEJ	R	40	M	in-person
SEM	R	25	F	in-person
SHM	D	60	M	in-person
STA	R	35	F	in-person
STB	D	55	M	in-person
STM	D	55	M	in-person
TOC	D	60	F	in-person
TSK	D	35	F	in-person
WIB	R	30	M	in-person
WIC	D	30	F	in-person
WIT	D	35	M	in-person
ZEB	D	35	M	in-person

Ch 3: In the Foxhole: How Campaigns Work

The incentives and expectations of any field or social space shape the behavior of those within it. Specialists in electoral production do not craft speeches, television ads, or outreach strategies in isolation, they do so as part of or on behalf of a campaign, among or at least in consultation with their peers and superiors in the campaign organization. The context of campaigns, how they are organized, what it feels like to be part of one, is a key component for understanding the decisions made by "campaign professionals."

Campaigns are not only attempts to achieve a goal—winning an election—they are also workplaces for campaign staff, clients for political consultants, and the production site for enormous quantities of political messaging. It is quite difficult, however, for an outsider to know what it is like to be part of a major national campaign, let alone exactly how campaigns make their strategic and creative decisions. Campaigns are usually very reluctant, if not entirely unwilling, to let people from outside the campaign into their "inner sanctum." While the contest is underway, most information about internal campaign dynamics comes from "leaks," whether through disgruntled or occasionally careless staffers, or strategically-calculated communications with journalists. Most after-the-fact accounts come from insiders who are interested in preserving their reputations for the next election season, whether at a post-election forum (e.g. Institute of Politics 2009; Jamieson 2009; Johnson 2009) or in the form of campaign memoirs (e.g. Plouffe 2010). My interviewees' accounts and my own (limited, but still quite informative) campaign experience, when combined with some of these secondary sources, do, however, reveal a number of things about how campaigns work.

First, although each campaign is unique in some ways, there is a widely-agreed-upon set of roles and order of operations for major campaigns. These are made clear in both prescriptive (McNamara 2008; Shaw 2004; Shea and Burton 2006) and descriptive (Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1997; Watson and Campbell 2003) accounts of campaigning. Second, as clients or workplaces, campaigns are strange entities: they are inherently short-lived, involve an ever-changing assortment of staff and roles, and operate, especially as elections near, literally all hours of the day and night. They are also both emotionally and intellectually and intense, hence the title of this chapter: many of the people I interviewed described the experience of working on a campaign as like "being in a foxhole" or "going through a war" with their fellow partisans. Finally, the ultimate indicator of status within a campaign is not title, pay, or even the contribution of winning ideas; it is getting to be "at the table" when key strategic decisions are made. These two characteristics of work in campaigns are important for simply understanding what campaigning is like, but they also indicate the ways the field of electoral production is autonomous from other parts of the political field: campaign workers share a particular kind of bond and an *illusio* (set of implicit goals or values) which are not necessarily present throughout other kinds of political work.

In the remainder of this chapter, I first give an overview of the history and structure of campaign organization and the differences between campaign staff and political consultants. I then turn to the ways my interviewees describe their campaign experiences to explore in more detail the two characteristics of campaign work mentioned above (the intensity of the work and the striving for strategic status) and the ways they shape the operation of the campaign field.

Timing & Structure of Campaigns

The basic task of a political campaign is always the same—to convince a sufficient portion of voters to turn out and vote for your candidate But the structure within which this goal is pursued has shifted substantially in the past 40 years. Through the middle of the 20th

century, political parties were the primary mobilizing force during campaigns—from choosing candidates to providing staff, from crafting messages or themes to making strategic decisions throughout campaigns (Crotty and Jacobson 1980; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Wattenberg 1998). Skocpol (Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; 2003) identified this as the "professionalization" of politics—the shift from associational organizations to professionally staffed ones—in every aspect of politics Now, the "candidate-centered" campaign and candidate-centered politics have replaced the party-run campaign (e.g. Crotty and Jacobson 1980; Sabato 1988; Katz and Mair 1995; Wattenberg 1998; Farrell and Webb 2000).

Although each campaign is an independent entity, there are many regularities about how they are run and organized. The two appendices to this chapter outline the timing and roles of campaigns in more detail, but generally, as early as two or more years before the (first) primary, a candidate will have identified some key people for his or her campaign: usually at least a campaign manager and a pollster. From that time until close to the deciding election (a loss in the primary, or else all the way through the general election), campaigns may be adding staff and consultants (to the extent their fundraising allows). Although the people filling the roles shift, there are some consistent roles to be played in every campaign. All campaigns need a campaign manager, and most campaigns have departments or at least individuals devoted to communications, fundraising, polling, opposition research, media, events, and voter contact or "field" (Steger, Kelly, and Wrighton 2006; Watson and Campbell 2003).

Most campaigns for elected office above the local level (and even many local races) have both regular staff and consultants who devise and implement campaign strategies with some degree of input or consent from the candidate involved (Thurber and Nelson 2000). Regular staff who work full time on a single campaign fill many of these roles; but consultants also provide services or advice in most of these areas. General consultants often act as campaign managers, or as supervisors to campaign managers, who in those cases are essentially relegated to primarily administrative rather than strategic duties. Communications and media may be handled by an on-staff communications director or a consultant, or both working together. Field operations are usually handled by regular staff and volunteers, while polling is almost always done by consultants who specialize in it. Because political consultants have been studied more extensively than campaign staff, it is worth dedicating some attention to them.

Political Consultants vs. Campaign Staff

While campaign staff often work for very little money, independent consultants are able to charge high—often arguably exorbitant—fees for their services and expertise. Many campaign staff I interviewed told me they aim to "hang out a shingle" of their own one day, and most consultants are former campaign staff; many also serve as formal or informal advisors to campaigns. Although there has been some disagreement on how exactly to define who is and is not a "political consultant" (Medvic 2003), the term is generally used to mean someone who makes a substantial portion of his or her income providing services to political campaigns; this is often (but not always) opposed to other full-time political workers who may work for political party organizations, elected officials, or be hired onto a single campaign for a cycle as a staffer rather than a consultant. Consultants' services can be as abstract as providing strategic advice, or as concrete as designing and distributing campaign mail or television advertisements. Political consultants work in a number of specialties, from "general" consultants who provide overall strategic advice and/or campaign management services, through pollsters, public relations and media experts, direct mail producers,

opposition researchers, and fundraisers. Most, but not all, consultants work on multiple campaigns each cycle. Political consulting is a relatively small, but growing, occupation. Rosenbloom estimated that in 1972 there were 300 firms providing any services to campaigns, and about 100 that "regularly manage[d] political campaigns" (Rosenbloom 1973, 4); by 1999 David Dulio, James Thurber, and their co-investigators identified 2,587 individuals who were principals or senior partners in political consulting firms (Dulio 2004). A few years later, Johnson (2001) estimated that there were between 3,000 and 7,000 full-time political consultants in the United States. My research, however, identified only 362 individuals who were principals or senior partners in firms we considered national in scope, which required having worked on at least one Presidential or Senate race, or on at least three House races in at least two different states; the other studies included political consultants working locally or on the state level in their frames.

When political consulting first emerged as an important and likely permanent part of the campaign landscape, scholars were primarily concerned with consultants' impact on the democratic process. Many worried that that the entry of private individuals whose careers were not tied to political institutions would mean, or had meant, the intrusion of market principles and their attendant ills: increases in unethical practices, campaigns focused on image rather than substance, and decreasing accountability of elected officials. Some observers blamed consultants for the downfall of parties (Rosenbloom 1973), while others simply accused them of taking advantage of parties' decline to their own benefit (Blumenthal 1980; Sabato 1981). These accounts and some later ones (Mancini 1999; Petracca 1989) depicted consultants as interlopers and mercenaries: public relations and advertising experts who introduced a new and mostly unwelcome style of campaigning into American politics.

It is true that consultants have played a rapidly increasing role in campaigns since the 1960s, and unlike the party operatives who previously did the lion's share of decision-making in campaigns, they work for multiple candidates in most cycles, in many locations. However, while it is difficult to know what motivated early entrants to the consulting field, contemporary consultants are not that different from party operatives in their reports of their motivations (Dulio 2004) or trust in citizens to make good decisions in the voting booth (Dulio and Nelson 2005). Rather than being adversaries of parties, consultants work in tandem with them, providing services parties no longer offer and collaborating to win elections (Dulio and Nelson 2005; Dulio 2004; Kolodny and Dulio 2003; Kolodny and Logan 1998; Thurber and Nelson 2000, 2004). There is an emerging consensus that parties work as strong networks of actors which include consultants, rather than as unified entities with consultants on the outside (Bernstein and Dominguez 2003; Bernstein 1999; Francia and Herrnson 2007; Montgomery and Nyhan 2010; Skinner, Masket, and Dulio 2012).

This "strong network" or field of electoral production not only has fairly delineated specialties and a clear consensus about the procedures for setting up and running a campaign, it also has its own particular feel and value system.

Intensity

Working on campaigns, especially as staff (from the lowest-tier field organizer to the campaign manager) is incredibly intense and intensive; the work is fast-paced and nearly round-the-clock as election dates near. There is a kind of summer-camp/theater production intimacy that often emerges amongst people working together on a campaign: people travel together, work together through the wee hours of the morning, and are all deeply invested in the outcome of this project they are working on together, usually out of some combination of partisan/ideological commitment and pure competiveness/team spirit. There are three

related aspects of this intensity: the love of politics for itself that brings people to the work, the prioritization of the campaign over all else and the concomitant incredibly long hours worked, and the emotional bonds created through this intensity. Mathew Mahler (2006) has written about the sensuality of campaigns; my interviewees described the all-encompassing closeness and intensity as well. GED told me: "you work very closely with someone, right? And it's like going to war: like you're in the bunker, you're in the foxhole together, and you have that bond because you've gone through this horrific experience with a person."

Love of the game

A number of people described being drawn to politics from an early age, the way many young people (especially, in American culture, boys) obsess about sports. HAT said:

> I think you have to look at it very similarly to like professional sports—you know, the love for football wasn't developed, you know, in NFL. It was developed, you know, out in, you know, middle school playing, you know, peewee football. There was initial experiences, and I think that that's shared [...] with a lot of the consultants—is built upon those exciting, early days of putting up your own signs and stealing opponent's signs at the same time—you know, it's those little tiny things that make a difference.

WIB made a similar comparison, in large part to emphasize the intensity of the competition:

> I mean, I enjoy seeing a good negative ad, and it's awesome. It's a lot like just enjoying your sports team, you know, the basketball team dump on the other—you know, in-your-face sort of thing. So there's that. You gotta be ready to fight. And you gotta be ready to tussle up and a lot of times the folks that are wanting to pull the punches generally don't survive.

And MAK explained that the extent to which people are obsessive about politics is a litmus test for him in hiring people for his campaigns and consulting firm:

> The other thing I always like to ask [in interviews] is: Who do you read and why? What are your favorite reporters? What do you think some of the best campaigns run have been and why? I want to know that they're just not kind of like hoping to get [any old job], but that they have interest, that they love what they do so much that they can say—it's the same thing, it's like, [...] if you're talking to the people who are baseball fans and really love it, you say, Well, what do you think the best baseball—who's the best hitter of all time and why? And they can actually have a formed opinion of that, a formed kind of philosophy or a set of principle viewpoints. That tells me that it's not just a job for them, that it's something that they care about and love.

Long Hours

When I was first starting this project, I read a memoir by Terry McAuliffe (McAuliffe and Kettmann 2007), one of the Clintons' key advisors and fundraisers, a former chair of the DNC and a (so far, failed) candidate himself. He describes being in the car on the way home from the hospital with his wife and newborn child, and, without consulting his wife (whom he knew would object), telling his driver to take them to a contributor's house so he could conduct some business while his family waited for him in the car. My initial reaction was to wonder what kind of completely inconsiderate and self-centered maniac would write about that kind of behavior with apparent pride, but in my interviews and observations I found that this level of prioritization of the campaign over all else was not at all uncommon. One interviewee told me about missing her sibling's wedding, and complained that the sibling "just did not understand" how campaigns work; another told me with some empathy about a new father who barely saw his first child, born in late summer of 2008, until after the election was over; my interviewee felt bad for this new father both for missing out on his kid's first few months, but just as much for having to miss some of the campaign to spend time with his child.

Nearly every person I interviewed told me about the long hours, working 12, 16, and even 20 hour days for weeks on end. I experienced this myself when I volunteered for the Obama campaign. I was a low-level, volunteer staffer in a non-competitive state, and my tasks primarily entailed organizing volunteers to make phone calls (or to organize *other* volunteers to make phone calls) to whichever battleground state we were calling that day. My daughter had her first birthday that October, and I dedicatedly made it home from the campaign office nearly every night for dinner (unlike my boss, who also had young children at home). But it became harder and harder to leave the office; I didn't want to miss anything, to miss a chance to be part of something. As the election neared, I began going back to the office most nights after my daughter was in bed, or else working from home on the tasks for the next day into the wee hours of the night. When every action could contribute to tipping the balance towards your candidate, and there is a firm end-date in sight, it is easy to prioritize the campaign over friends, family, sleep, and nutrition.

The appeal

I asked HEB, who had worked on Presidential campaigns for over 30 years, whether he was planning to do another one. He said:

> There is a pace and a feel to a presidential campaign that is like nothing else. It is like being in the World Series. And I love it. I really do. [Indicating picture] This picture was on the wall, by the way, in my office at the [general election candidate] campaign. [...] And I had him sign it for me afterwards. It has no significance other than the fact that it was on the wall. I love havin' it there because it reminds of how much I enjoyed the experience despite of the fact that we lost. When you do a presidential, you feel like you were in the middle of the most important thing going on in the world.

For a number of people I interviewed, the intensity of campaigns lured them away from other pursuits. BLB, another senior "politico," told me:

> I was thinking that I'd probably go to law school, be a lawyer. As those decisions came [...] I realized what I wanted to be involved in was campaigns. I felt that this was something I was really good at and I enjoyed. [...] When we won in 1974, it was one of the greatest nights of my life. [...] Five months, [the candidate, for a Senate Race] and I travelled together for 153 days with three days off and travelled 93,000 miles without leaving the state.
>
> DL: *Wow.*
>
> That's an experience like going through a war with somebody—being in a foxhole. We still sit around and tell old war stories about that campaign. There's a lot of shared history.

Consequences

The consequence of this love of politics and the intensity of campaigning is that campaign industry workers experience themselves as being members of a strange and exclusive club, where the campaign comes before everything else. ROD told me "people that work in politics are not normal people." STM said "a lot of the people in this field are odd—very odd people," then listed a number of people he considered "brilliant but odd. But one of the ways they're odd is they really can see and feel how regular people, even though they are not regular people, are going to react to something." Campaign workers and consultants feel a bond with each other that has nothing to do with political ideology or partisan loyalties; in fact, a number of people told me they were good friends with members of the other party, because only other "politicos" really understand their lives. They also form very close working relationships, and use their evaluations of people they have been "in the trenches" with to inform who they try to work with in the future. This contributes to a culture of hiring-by-network, which in turn makes it difficult if not impossible for outsiders to get jobs in campaigns (this is discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4 and especially Chapter 6). More importantly, perhaps, this sense that "we are not like other people" is part of the *illusio* of the field of electoral production, the feeling that the game is worth playing for its own sake, not only for consequences or effects outside the campaign ("even though we lost...").

In the Room

The other key feature of campaign work is the value placed on being "at the table" or "in the room" when key decisions are made. For many specialists in electoral production, being the kind of person who is trusted by candidates and others to participate in shaping campaign strategy is deeply important, both for their own sense of enjoyment of the work and for their ability to market themselves to future campaigns and clients. In talking to people who had worked at all levels in national campaigns, a tripartite hierarchy became clear: those who run campaigns or are "in the room" for key strategic decisions (a very small "inner circle" on any campaign), other strategy-involved staff and consultants, and "vendors" and others who work in or on campaigns but are providing a service or doing "grunt work" rather than making key decisions. I mostly observed this from people who aimed to get to the next level—people I would think of as vendors often insisted that they

actually offer strategy, or campaign staff who said that, while they were not in the "*inner* inner circle" they were indeed "in the room" for some key discussion.

CHM made this explicit:

> The smaller the campaign, the larger the role that we have, and the larger the campaign, the more you're fighting to be [in] that [strategic] role. Everyone wants it, right? You just have more access to it if it's a smaller campaign. I think there's a conception pretty widely held among political consultants that pollsters have an edge on being the strategist, because we have numbers behind what we're saying.

LEJ described the process of moving towards being "in the room" and the fights over access that he witnessed on the campaign he worked on:

> [...] if you show some value to yourself, you can then become involved. And I never really asked to be involved, but you sort of just demonstrate that you have it and you then can get—[...] invited to more [important meetings]. I mean, there was, like, an inner circle of the campaign, and I don't know exactly how you would define it—it might have been 6 people or 8 people or 10 people—and I definitely was not in it, I mean I was a little younger and I wasn't part—I didn't have any history with [the candidate], and really the people who do that are generally people with a history and who have a much deeper level of trust. But I did, I think as a result of doing good work, you do get pulled into different strategy meetings and things like that, because they want your perspective on, you know, what might work against some of the opponents and what [the] vulnerabilities are and things like that. [...] I mean, any workplace has a lot of internal politics, but a political campaign is on a whole different level, because it's all these very political people. And there's all this drama and backstabbing and people trying to like kind of—you get authority or something, people want to try to capture it from you and do an end-around and talk to this person behind your back.

For people who believe they have the qualifications to be part of the "inner circle," not being included is a slight, so much so that they might choose not work on a campaign rather than be relegated to a role they consider too far outside the center of power on the campaign. BEH described to me choosing to work for another primary candidate when he could not get the kind of position he wanted with the candidate with whom he was friends and whom he most believed in:

> And then I also worked when [Primary Candidate B] ran in 2000. I worked for [Candidate B] under somewhat strange circumstances. It was around my friend [Candidate A] there was this pretty thick palace guard, [consultant] whom you've probably read about [...] sort of headed up—and I spent a

> long time trying to pierce the palace guard and get a meaningful role, and I couldn't.
>
> DL: *Despite being friends with [Candidate A] himself.*
>
> Yeah. I mean, you know, they were perfectly willing to have my help on the outside, but nobody wanted me around the table. And [Candidate B] was a friend of mine for a number of years and had decided to run and needed to have someone around him who was not identified as an evangelical operative but rather as a Republican political operative, and so he asked me and the money was pretty good, so I accepted.
>
> DL: *Even though he was running against John McCain.*
>
> Yeah, ironically. But then when [Candidate B] dropped out after New Hampshire, the next day I was on the [Candidate A] campaign. As a matter of fact, I brought a whole bunch of people with me from the [Candidate B] campaign over to [Candidate A]. So I wound up workin' on that campaign anyway.

Similarly, SEJ told me about initially refusing requests to work on a major candidate's Presidential campaign, when he was offered roles without enough stature. I asked him why he chose to work for that candidate over others in the primary, and he said:

> I'd always liked him. I mean, I was like one of the people in [a previous run] like, young people who, like, you know, went online and gave him 25 bucks or whatever. Like, so I'd always liked him personally. And frankly, I guess I'd be lying if I didn't say that they gave me a pretty good offer—not financially, but I mean, I started out as a national field director, which was like a—I mean—they had offered—they asked me if I wanted to be the Iowa State Director first, and I said no. And they said, Well, how about do you want to be the Regional Political Director for the Northwest, I said no. And I just thought it wasn't going to happen, actually. I was about to take another job back at an Association, which would have not been good. But like the day before I [*with a little laugh*] took that job, they called and said, All right, how about National Field Director. Hard to say no to that.

So, however much SEJ and HEB liked the candidates they eventually worked for, neither was willing to work for a campaign unless he had a role in making top-level campaign strategy. SEJ's definition of a "good offer" is the level of the position, not the size of the paycheck. On the other hand, KAD, the driver for a major Presidential candidate, in response to my question about what kinds of people get ahead in campaigns, noted that some people do not share the goal of getting to the inner circle, and that these people can contribute a great deal:

> It also depends on how you define getting ahead. I mean, for some people, the last thing they would ever want to do is be

> around the candidate all the time. You know, maybe they want to develop the new web strategy for the-you know, online strategy or something-that's their sort of dream. So, you know in that sense, those people are going to be incredibly valuable for a campaign...

But KAD immediately shifted talked about the limits of that approach to campaign work:

> ...And they'll never have direct influence over the candidate or the top decision maker. So, I mean, I think it depends on how you define that. I mean, ultimately, if you have some influence over top decision-makers, you know, there's a lot of value in that in politics. [...] And so the people who get those responsibilities are the ones who are excited and eager to put themselves in those positions to show that they can do those things on those categories. It's like the people who want to be in the game.

KEJ discussed her media firm's role in the campaigns they worked on:

> We want to know everything that's going on. We want to look at the budget, we want to know who-you know, polling-we want all of that. So, the more involved we can be on a strategic level, the better.

STM also valued being in charge, but had determined that Presidential campaigns were not where he wanted to be. I asked him if he might like to at some point work "on a presidential in some capacity" and he interjected: "No, presidentials suck. Presidentials-you know, there's 10 or 20 top people, and everybody just implements." I asked "What if you're one of the 10 or 20 people?" and he said "You know, it's such a cauldron of assholes that get to that level that I don't want it." He was happy being the principal in his own firm, and running things from there, but he shared the understanding that

Three of my interviewees, one who worked for the Obama campaign and two who worked for Hillary Clinton, described the different approaches these two campaigns took to the issue of struggles among campaign insiders for key roles. This story is consistent with what the other two told me, and also with some published reports:

> [Obama's campaign] brought on a relatively small number and then raised the drawbridge, [...] they did not continue to accrete consultants. Whereas the Hillary campaign's did. [...] I had a good friend working on kinda the inside on the Hillary campaign as one of the consultants, and he said, you know, "you could be at a totally inner circle of the Clinton campaign, look around the room of twenty people, and realize that only four of them are on staff." [...] Exact opposite in the Obama campaign, where to my knowledge I think Axelrod might have maintained his independent status, but I think everybody else was kind of on staff, you know, but it really gave you a sense of uh common organizational identity.

Struggles about who gets to be in the "inner circle" are often attributed to "big egos" or "assholes," but nearly everyone involved in campaigns seeks to move inward or upward to greater involvement in strategy.

Implications

The intensity of campaigns, combined with the goal of being in the "inner circle," are part of why it is incredibly difficult for outsiders or newcomers to gain meaningful roles in campaigns. Roles in the "inner circle," and even outer-inner circles—in other words, strategic decision-making positions of any sort—are restricted to those who have put in their time on campaigns, have shown themselves to be valuable, and/or have close relationships with the candidate, although none of these is necessarily a guarantee of gaining access to that elite status, as BEH's story showed. This is made clear to volunteers and lower-level staff who want to get more involved in a campaign.

Someone who worked managing a regional office for a Presidential campaign (COP) told me she wanted to be on staff:

> because I wanted to know what was going on. I wanted to understand and get access to information, and I felt that—that's what I had seen as a volunteer, that umm, you know, as much as the campaign did I think more than most campaigns to get volunteers, more—to share a lot more information and be a lot more open, there's obviously a ton of things that never get shared with volunteers, and I wanted to be on the inside and I wanted to see what that was like.

My own experience trying to get involved in campaigns, both for my own partisan motivations and to begin my dissertation research, is a case in point: In 2004 I wanted to help out with Kerry's campaign, and had just left five years managing volunteers and running events for a small non-profit. I volunteered as much as I could, and told anyone who appeared to be in charge that I had relevant experience and could help out more than by just making phone calls. In retrospect, this was incredibly naive; no one was going to hand control over anything substantial to an unknown volunteer, no matter how many skills that volunteer brought from other fields.

In the 2006 season I resolved to get involved in a campaign earlier in the cycle, in the hopes of moving into the inner ranks where I could make use of my skills and play a more meaningful role. I identified a nearby, newly competitive House race, and showed up at every volunteer opportunity I heard about. I told the people running the campaign that I could dedicate all day every Friday to the campaign, which I thought would be understood as a substantial time commitment that would grant me some access to campaign decision-making. Instead, I was asked to come help set up for a single event, and then not called again until phone-banking began, and again, I was only ever asked to make phone calls despite offering more.

In 2008, I tried again, even earlier in the cycle, to volunteer substantial time for that same House candidate's re-election; this time I got a call back from someone working on the campaign, who asked me a bit about my experience and then inquired about my time availability. I was willing to work every day that summer after my summer job as a grader ended at noon, and all day on Fridays; they told me that if that was something I could get out of, and if I was willing to work 60 or 70 hours a week, there might be a staff position open for me, but otherwise they could not really use me.

With this new understanding, I set out later that summer, when my grading commitment ended, to get work on the Obama campaign. In addition to telling whoever I could find that I was available, I began simply showing up at each and every volunteer-related event I could find. When the campaign opened an office in Oakland, I volunteered to staff the office full time. There was still some resistance; the volunteers who had been running things in Oakland up to that point were reluctant to hand over authority to a newcomer—even at the local, volunteer, non-swing-state level of the campaign organization people wanted to keep what decision-making power they had. Eventually, an acquaintance from graduate school was hired as the paid staff person for the Northern California region; she selected me to be a "regional field organizer" and I was finally a real campaign staffer, albeit an unpaid one at the very lowest level of the hierarchy. As soon as I got that position, I felt myself starting to want to be more involved, to have access to more "inner circle" meetings. That was part of why, as I discussed above, I always wanted to be at the office. Once I had achieved the exalted status of actually being in charge of something on a campaign, I started to view volunteers in the same way earlier campaigns had apparently viewed me: as having an unreasonable belief about what they were capable of contributing based on the time and experience they had, as unaccountably expecting to be given responsibility based on their competencies in worlds outside our campaign. My fellow full-time campaigners and I complained about all the entitled volunteers who showed up at the front desk expecting to be given work beyond phone-banking or data entry.

After that experience, I saw how I could have begun a career in political work; a couple of my fellow Regional Field Organizers got jobs with state-wide political organizations, and have continued in that work; my boss on that campaign got a job in the Obama administration. The only way I was able to get to that point was by being available to work full time, for free, and by being persistent in my pursuit of a position. This experience was by no means unique to me; in fact, as the next chapter shows, this is one of the most common ways to enter the field of electoral production, and one of only a very few approaches with any chance of success.

Appendix 1: Order of Operations For Setting Up a Campaign

Below is a drawn from interviews, my own experience, and the a number of books on campaigns and campaigning (e. g. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1997; McNamara 2008; Shaw 2004); it is a general overview, not an exact description of all campaigns.

1. As early as two (or sometimes more) years before the first primary, a candidate, in deciding to run, assesses how much money s/he can raise and other factors affecting his or her viability. S/he recruits (or draws on existing) top advisors to help make the decision.
2. Polls are conducted to get a sense of the candidate's positives and negatives, the match between candidate's issue positions and concerns of the electorate, and the strength of potential opponents.
3. The decision to run is formally made, initial staff and consultants are brought on, and the first/top staff will lay out a general strategy, including the main message themes, how they will try to portray their candidate and their opponent/s, which groups of voters they will target, etc. Those people who start on a campaign early, whatever their formal role, tend to be in an "inner circle" of decision-makers who craft message and strategy.
4. The small group of consultants, staff, and advisors brought on early in the campaign usually brings in the rest of the staff and consultants.
    a. Consultants recommend other consultants and vendors (suppliers of largely-non-strategy-related services, such as web-hosting or software), sometimes in exchange for referral bonuses.
    b. Consultants may also recommend staff, and/or veto staff and consultants whom they dislike. Staff may also recommend or veto consultants.
    c. Staff bring on their own staff to fill out their departments; as described in Chapters 4 and 6, this is primarily done through networks and reputations, and it is rare for positions to be posted publicly.
5. Depending on the size and budget of the campaign, polls will be conducted 2 - 3 more times over the course of the campaign.
6. The size of the staff increases as money allows; the intensity and hours of activity increase steadily all the way through election day.
7. The 4 - 5 days leading up to election day (and sometimes longer, especially with the increase in early voting and absentee voting) are usually designated GOTV (get-out-the-vote), when the emphasis shifts to getting known supporters out to the polls rather than persuading undecided voters.

Appendix 2: Campaign Departments

Below I list all the key roles/departments in a large national campaign, roughly in order of that department's importance or status within a campaign:

- *General Campaign Consultants & Campaign Managers* (in consultation with a number of the other titles/specialties) are, generally, in charge of managing the overall strategy of the campaign—the coordination and timing of the message, field strategy and GOTV, ads, stump speeches & other speeches, events, political/coalition-building, etc. That said, campaign managers (at least at the House and lower levels) are sometimes more like administrators or sophisticated office managers, who report to a general consultant who is actually in charge of all the coordination and strategy.
- *Pollsters* conduct polls. They are often among the earliest consultants brought onto a campaign; this gives them a lot of leverage to shape strategy, affect who else is hired, and also get into the "inner circle" of the campaign. Most campaigns will conduct at least 3—4 polls; higher-level and better-funded campaigns will conduct many more and may employ multiple polling firms (e.g. for different states or regions).
- There are many types of *communications* professionals. Generally, there is a director of communications, a media strategist, a media firm, a speechwriter or two, a spokesperson or many (sometimes this is an honorary position, or a duty given to allies/advocates of the campaign; within campaigns they are often called "surrogates" i.e. people to send to events instead of the candidate). Communications directors and speechwriters are almost always staff positions; other work may be done by consultants or consulting firms. Basically, the work is divided into message generation/strategy, done in concert usually with the pollster and polling data; and message delivery, which is tasked to ad firms and spokespeople.
- There are four kinds of communications consulting firms hired by campaigns:
    - Ad firms/media firms usually have some creative freedom in crafting ads, though they have to be approved by the campaign. Generally, the campaign tells the firm some general outlines of what they would like to get across, and the media firm comes up with some number of options, all, some, or none of which may be used by the campaign.
    - Direct mail firms create mail pieces. As with ad firms, they have a general sense from the campaign of what their message frames are, but they have a good deal of freedom within that.
    - Phone firms are often considered simply vendors, but a number of them position themselves as strategists, too. Their work can include organizing "telephone town halls," recording and delivering "robocalls," or managing phone banks with live, paid phone-bankers. The strategy comes in crafting the phone message, and in targeting the phone calls.
    - "New Media" or online firms handle websites, email, social networking sites, sometimes blogs, and sometimes online ads. This is, of course, the newest kind of campaign communication; there are a number of young "politicos" with new media skills opening their own consulting shops or working in high-level campaigns. There is also a lot of discussion in the political-consultant professional publications about what new media can and cannot do, and how to use it effectively. Many campaigns have new media departments in addition to, or instead of, using an outside new media firm.

- *Field & GOTV* mean handling one-on-one contacts with voters; this is also called the "ground game." This is a key, but usually lower-status, part of campaign work. It involves organizing phone banks and canvasses (i.e. door-knocking) and recruiting and managing "armies" of volunteers.
- *Research/Data* includes a three different kinds of work:
    - Opposition research is almost always done on-staff, and is just what it sounds like: digging up information on the opponent to be used in contrast or negative ads. This is usually thought of as scandal-mongering, but it also means just finding records of the candidate's positions on issues, and it also entails trying to ensure that everything in the opponent's opposition research—i.e. everything the opponent's campaign might find on your candidate—is already known, as well.
    - Data usually means managing and maintaining a voter file; there are firms who provide these files, but the management of the data itself is usually done in-house. Files contain at least each relevant voter's address, telephone number, registration, age, sex, and voting history. These files may also include data on responses to questions from previous contacts, for the current campaign or previous ones (e.g. how likely they say they are to vote for the candidate) and various other kinds of information, including purchased consumer data, that can be used for targeting.
    - Targeting/micro-targeting/nano-targeting involves modeling, based on various kinds of data, which potential voters will be receptive to which kinds of messages, how likely they are to vote for your candidate, etc. Firms that do targeting have closely guarded models; micro-targeting was the "hot" technique around 2004 and is widely credited with being a key piece of Bush's re-election strategy.
- *Political Department* sounds redundant as a part of a political campaign, but it is the department tasked with managing coalitions and endorsements for the campaign. For example, one former Democratic political director I talked with described his job as getting Black churches to agree to let the candidate come talk to the congregation on a Sunday, and getting unions and other constituency groups to agree to endorse and, ideally, mobilize their members to volunteer. Under the political director their are usually a number of positions linked to particular key constituencies: Democratic campaigns usually have Directors of LGBT outreach, Latino Outreach, and so on; Republican campaigns will have people in charge of Evangelical outreach, Tea Party outreach, and so on. Some of these are paid, regular staff positions; others are honorary/surrogate/spokesperson type roles.
- *Policy directors* craft policy statements; they usually work with policy advisory boards in the relevant domains, which are made up of prominent endorsers from those fields (not campaign staff or paid consultants). Most policy task forces and advisory boards have a largely honorary/endorser role, rather than doing much actual policy work; the size of the policy staff on even large Presidential campaigns is usually small compared with other departments.
- *Scheduling & Advance* means putting on events and managing the candidate's schedule; these are staff roles, and require a lot of traveling and event-coordination.

- *Operations* usually means handling all the administrative and legal tasks associated with being a large organization—paying salaries and bills, filing with the FEC, securing insurance, etc.
- *Finance* is just what it sounds like: campaign fundraising. Most of the actual fundraising is done by the candidate making calls to major donors, and by surrogates for the campaign bundling donations, but the finance department will also coordinate donation drives for smaller donors (often working with a consulting firm specializing in fundraising), as well as manage the processing, accounting, and budgeting.

Chapter 4: The Making and Makeup of Campaign Professionals

Introduction

The demographic composition of specialists in electoral production presents a sort of puzzle: it is an occupation with no formal barriers to entry, not even the requirement of a college degree[7], but it is far more white, male, and educated than the population as a whole. Campaign workers, especially consultants and those at the highest levels of campaign hierarchies, are much more similar to members of Congress and workers in elite professions than they are to citizens in general, voters specifically, or even to the most enthusiastic partisans of their own parties.

I will show in this chapter that it is in fact rather difficult to find paid work on a political campaign, as the story of my own search for campaign work from the last chapter indicated. The difficulty is not in gaining admission to competitive programs (as with medical schools) or passing a challenging exam (as with law schools). Instead, since there are no credentials or formal training required in order to participate in decisions about national campaign strategy, one of the challenges facing potential "politicos" is simply figuring out what the first step towards this sort of career might be. Many of my interviewees pointed out this difference between campaign work and other kinds of high-profile, highly-paid careers: the lack of a school-based path college to work in campaigns makes the process opaque to the uninitiated. Further, despite this lack of explicit requirements for "campaign professionals," I found that nearly everyone in such a position followed a similar path. Becoming a national-level campaign professional generally requires a term as a low-status apprentice on a national campaign, either volunteering, interning, or being paid practically nothing. These sorts of positions are rarely advertised, and so are very difficult to access for those without existing connections to campaign work. In addition to little or no pay, these positions frequently require interstate moves, and end on election day with no guarantee of further employment; this effectively necessitates external financial resources.

I begin this chapter by using my "politicos" dataset to describe the makeup of the field with my interviewees' perceptions of it. I describe the composition and characteristics of the population of individuals who have had key decision-making positions in national-level political campaigns, then turn to my interviewees to understand the process that generates this rather rarefied world. On the one hand, many of them emphasized the "meritocracy" of the field; by this, they usually meant that people who do well in entry-level positions are rewarded and move into more responsible work, or that family background or the quantity or prestige of one's education do not influence career success. In a sense, they were right: they described making judgments about past employees or co-workers that were entirely about their abilities on the campaign; and I present evidence in chapter 4 that education beyond (or even, possibly, below) a college degree has little or no effect on political consultants' career success. However, this perception misses all the ways that the structure and culture of campaign careers work to filter out those without sufficient economic, cultural, and social capital, as a few of my interviewees recognized.

After discussing interviewees' takes on the meritocratic nature of their work, I turn to their descriptions of both their own and their suggested paths to becoming specialists in electoral production. I asked every person I interviewed both about their own career trajectories and about the advice they would give to someone interested in gaining entry into this field; the answers to these questions painted a clear picture of a fairly uniform path.

[7] Many notable "politicos" never graduated from college; Karl Rove, for example, attended four undergraduate institutions but never finished a degree.

Make-Up of the field

The "politicos" dataset is to my knowledge the first and only attempt to catalog the entirety of individuals responsible for generating national campaigns' messages and strategies. I present here some of the salient descriptive characteristics of these specialists in electoral production, both as compared to other professions and as distributed within campaign organizations in 2004-2008. I also include data on political consultants collected by the Pew-funded study in 1999. The overall picture is of an elite or hard-to-access occupation, similar in composition to some of the most prestigious and well-paid professions.

Table 1 lists the gender composition of top campaign staff and consultants from both parties, as well as of Congress, architects and engineers, chief executives, and lawyers. "Top Campaign Staff" include all staff working at the National level of a Presidential campaign as either a Campaign Manager, Deputy Campaign Manager, head of a department, or deputy head of a department; Regional directors and campaign managers, as well as heads of regional departments; and state directors and deputy directors. Consultants' data comes from both my dataset and the Thurber et al study(1999); the figures for Congress come from the Congressional Research Service (Amer and Manning 2008), and the remaining occupations come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011).

[Table 1 about here]

Campaign work is clearly a male-dominated occupation, especially among Republicans, but also among consultants from both parties. The gender disparity in political consultants has been the study of two dissertations and at least one published article (Brewer 2003; Dittmar n.d.; Panagopoulos, Dulio, and Brewer 2011); those works provide a number of good explanations, but here I am simply interested in showing that electoral production broadly has the demographic composition of elite occupations. The consultants in the Thurber et al data are clearly much more disproportionately male than the consultants I identified; this may be an indication that gender barriers have been reduced somewhat, at least among national-level political consultants, but the differences in data collection and "sampling frames" are such that no firm conclusions should be drawn about change over time from this comparison.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 shows the percentage of white people in selected occupations, in Congress, and in various components of my dataset, along with the Thurber et al consultants study. Again we see that Democratic campaign staff, even at the top levels of campaign hierarchies, are closest to the general population. While architects are more disproportionately male than any of the campaign professional groups, Republican "politicos" are more disproportionately white than any other occupation, and even Democratic consultants are less racially diverse than Congress. (I use the 111th Congress for comparison as that is the one elected in 2008, so it is most relevant for comparisons with campaign staff in 2004 and 2008 and consultants identified in 2010).

The educational profile of campaign industry workers is also more like that of those in elite occupations than the population at large. Table 3 shows the percentage of individuals with an advanced degree in each of ten class categories based on the Erikson-Goldthorpe scheme (1987) in the General Social Survey for 2004, 2006, and 2008. It also shows the class

positions of my interviewees' parents, based on their responses to my questions.

[Table 3 about here]

In my dataset, 40.4% of the people for whom we found educational attainment data (see Ch. 2 for notes on missing data) had graduate degrees, nearly the same proportion as in the highest occupational category shown in Table 3 and far more than in the next-highest. Many of campaign industry workers have law degrees; pollsters often have a Master's or a PhD; however, only in polling (and possibly the newly emerging field of campaign data analytics) would be any agreement among "politicos" that an academic or professional degree is advisable, and these degrees are certainly not necessary for the vast majority of campaign work.

I had hoped in this project to systematically gather information on class background, but that information proved nearly impossible to find using publicly available sources as I did for my dataset. However, I did ask my interviewees about their parents' work when time in the interview allowed; their answers, categorized according to the same scheme, are included in Table 3. I cannot claim that my interviewees are a representative sample of the campaign field, so this part of the table is more illustrative or indicative than conclusive; it is certainly possible that people from better-off backgrounds were more likely to respond to my interview requests than others. Still, it is worth noting how disproportionately professional my interviewees' parents were; I suspect based on the racial and educational makeup of the field that my interviewees class backgrounds are roughly in line with the distribution of social origins throughout the campaign profession, but unfortunately that question cannot be answered definitively with these data.

Comparisons with other occupations inside and outside politics show that political producers are more like incumbents in the professions than like the population as a whole. But specialists in electoral production are not drawn from the population as a whole; they are almost always (as my interviewees report, below) life-long die-hard fans of politics. Accordingly, it makes sense to compare the demographics of campaign workers within each party to the "base" they are presumably drawn from and the people with whom they might communicate.

[Table 4 about here]

Table 4 shows the percentage white, percentage black, and the N for which I have data, for five of these groups from the General Social Survey, and five groups in my "politicos" dataset. Although the racial composition of Democratic campaign workers is not radically different from that of the civilian labor force (about 78% white versus about 74%), they are much more white and male than any group of Democratic partisans or "leaners," or even true independents. Even the most politically interested Democrats in the general population as measured by the General Social Survey are more racially diverse, and especially have a higher proportion of African-Americans, than any group of Democratic politicos. (Note that the "chairs and advisors" category includes all members of targeted outreach committees such as "Latinos for Obama," as well elected-official endorsers and strategic advisers.) The politically interested group includes "strong" and "not strong" Democrats, I.e. everyone who chose "Democrat" as their first answer to the party identification series of questions, and only those who said they were "very" interested in politics (on a question with five answer choices: "very," "fairly," "somewhat" "not very" and "not at all").

There is less of a disjuncture between the racial makeup of Republicans and their "base," as Table 5 shows.

[Table 5 about here]

Republicans are overwhelmingly white at every level of partisanship and in all parts of the campaign hierarchy. Still, there is a small but non-zero difference between the racial makeup of the top levels of Republican campaign staff and consultants (95.6% and 94.1% white in my data) and republican partisans; weak Republicans are only 89% white, even strong and politically interested Republicans are slightly more diverse than the ranks of Republican "politicos". However, while it is Republican political producers who stand out as far more racially homogenous than the workforce as a whole, it is actually Democratic campaign workers who are the least representative of the voters they most need to turn out on election days.

In addition to examining the racial, gender, and educational makeup of the field as a whole, understanding how different group are distributed among the various campaign functions can also shed light on the way the field of electoral production works. Table 6 shows the percent white, percent male, percent with an advanced degree, and average age of people working in the different major departments of Presidential and Senate campaigns in 2004, 2006, and 2008.

[Table 6 About Here]

A few things stand out here: first, the Political departments are by far the most racially diverse in both parties; this is not surprising given that the task of political departments is largely to recruit and mobilize identity- or issue-based groups of supporters (such as Latinos, Evangelical Christians, etc). Second, women in both parties are concentrated in Scheduling and Advance (setting up events, primarily), operations (where the administrative functions of campaigns are housed), and finance (raising money and managing it); these are three of the least strategic portions of campaign organizations. More Democrats than Republicans in most departments (and overall) have advanced degrees; the one exception below is in operations (which includes a number of lawyers). However, if we were to sort the departments by the percentage with an advanced degree, the order would be similar across both parties: most in Policy, then Operations, followed by Political and Research; in both parties, the least-over-educated departments are Communications, Scheduling and Advance, and Internet and New Media. There is somewhat less consistency in the departmental average ages across parties, although in both parties Policy has the highest average age. There are thus consistencies in racial, gender, and educational composition of the campaign departments across parties, despite the differences between the parties in their overall demographics and educational attainment. This is noteworthy because it indicates that similar processes or standards may operate in both parties to place individuals in particular kinds of campaign work. Although some research has found that Republicans generally have a more hierarchical party and campaign structure than Democrats (e.g. Heaney et al. 2012), and that different competitive forces may be at work when consultants from each party look for clients (Grossmann 2009a), most of my research has shown few inter-party differences in typical "politico" career paths. In the remainder of this chapter, I report my interviewees' accounts of what it took for them to find their way into and move up as political producers, as well as their advice to others seeking to enter

campaign work.

Perceptions of Meritocracy, Realities of Access

When I asked my interviewees questions about how someone can become successful in "this business," many of them answered by extolling the meritocratic nature of their field. This was somewhat more common from Republicans, but I heard it from a few Democrats as well, from both men and women and at least one person of color. Despite their own generally quite privileged backgrounds, and despite the over-representation of whites and the well-educated, many people described the world of campaign work as uniquely open and meritocratic.

OLB made a fairly typical statement about the meritocratic nature of campaign work:

> And, you know, this is a bit of a digression, but somebody once said to me that the great thing about a campaign is that, you know, you succeed completely based on your merits. They've never seen another place where that happens. And it's totally true. If you're capable and you can do the job, then you're going to be asked to do more jobs. And if you do them and are capable, then you're going to do more, and you can essentially climb, you know, as high as possible. [... Karl] Rove and Rahm Emanuel [..] and friggin' Obama's guy—what's his name—Axelrod and Plouffe, you know, those guys are all extremely hard workers and really toiled to be in the position that they're at without this kind of nepotism climate of, Oh, well, you're dad's important, so you're going to get this job. You know, they may have used contacts at one point to get in that position, but then you have to prove yourself.

OLB is also typical of many others I heard in that, while extolling the meritocracy found in campaign work, he also acknowledges the important role that social capital—connections to people already involved in politics, in this case—plays in this field.

SEJ made a similar point:

> Well, it is a cliché, but I think politics is still, not purely but for the most part, a meritocracy. You know, if Karl Rove's son decides that he wants to get involved in politics, might he have a leg up? Of course he would. But he's not going to get hired by a lot of campaigns if he doesn't produce. And so I think, you know, it's less about pedigree than it is about kind of hard work and being fairly—I don't know, fairly intelligent, but fairly able to adapt and identify situations. You don't need to be a policy whiz, I mean, you really do kind of just need to have a good instinct for what's going to work and be willing to put in a lot of hours, especially when people are young and come to D.C., you see people working unbelievably hard and unbelievably long hours, because that is really what they need to do to get there. And so yeah, I think the main thing is just, I guess, a combination of hard work, good political instincts

> and, you know, knowing that for the most part, if you do work hard, you'll be rewarded.

FAS also explained sincerely that background does not matter for rising in campaigns, at least up to a certain point:

> You know, I think the great thing about politics for people is it's a great equalizer. And what I mean by that is, it doesn't matter what walk of life you come from, it is really all about being successful and being respected. And people who have every opportunity and gift and financial advantage in the world, are equal to somebody who has no money, who has relatively little education. Now, there's a point at which that stuff catches up with you, but only at an extremely high level. So, it's a great equalizer. So, if you're a kid with limited resources, limited education and limited sort of family connections, you can do really well, really fast on your smarts, on your skill, on your work ethic, and in your ability to sort of get the job done. And […] to answer your question specifically, it is really all about hard work.

The three electoral specialists quoted above are all Republicans, but STB, a senior advisor to Democratic candidates with his own consulting firm, told me "I would never think to ask somebody if I was hirin' for a campaign—in fact, I've never asked anybody where they went to school. I always want to know what campaigns they've been in." WIB, a Republican, told me that not only does what college you went to not matter, but college itself is not even necessary: "I've seen examples of folks that haven't gotten a college education and have done tremendously well in campaign politics. You know, just because they were willing to put in the time, they were smart and they got involved at a local level and followed people on the way up." QUM explained to me that she had seen a number of people drop out of college once they got started in campaigns, but she had finished even though it took her seven years.

Based on my research, these "politicos" are not wrong, exactly, to say that hard work is rewarded within the field of electoral production. No one who has become a successful specialist in this world got into their position solely through having powerful connections, a degree from an elite college or university, or well-off parents. Everyone I interviewed had put in their time working long hours, and many had started out at the very bottom tier of a campaign hierarchy. Further, there was broad consensus among my interviewees, as well as among those speaking at conferences for "campaign professionals" and other training materials for "politicos," that everyone in this field has to show they can work very hard and long hours, stay calm or at least competent under pressure, and produce acceptable work with quick turnaround; they agreed that those who cannot do these things do not last long no matter what connections or pedigree they might have. Further, in Chapter 4's analyses of political consultants' positions, there is corroboration for the widespread perception that an advanced degree does not correlate with success in this field.

However, many features of the path into more-responsible positions in electoral production nonetheless are differently accessible to those starting out with different resources. It does appear that attending an elite college, especially among Democrats, is

helpful[8]; certainly some colleges are more likely than others to generate connections to people working in campaigns. So while there are some ways that campaigns do indeed reward those who are able to work hard, the systems and the culture, and just the fact that it is politics, work to filter out most lower-income people before they get a chance to enter the field and show how hard they can work. (The requirements for long hours, as well as other aspects of the culture, also limit the numbers and involvement of women in campaign work; this is covered in-depth in the work by Dittmar and Brewer cited above so I will not go into those details here; but some of the same issues they found were corroborated by my research.)

A few people I interviewed did notice and pointed out the filtering effects of the standard path to campaign work. WIB told me:

> a path that a lot of us have taken into campaign politics included an internship or working for an extended period of time for free, right? And I understand socioeconomic issues. Not everybody can do that. So that may be a barrier that--you know, that's the first thing I would recommend to anybody that says, I want to be involved in campaign politics, and if that person can't do that, then they're automatically at a disadvantage. So, you know, that's probably very obvious. And I'm not sure if there's a way around that, but it is where it is.

ROD, a Democrat and a white woman, discussed these barriers as having to do with culture and ethnicity, although they have at least as much to do with class and economic resources:

> …I think that being involved in this type of work is almost like a luxury, and it's not the—culturally speaking, it's not something that, I think, diverse…I think people from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to do. Right? Like most people that—recent or not so recent immigrants are really focused on an education that leads to a specific career. This is very different. I could have an education in anything. Like, the fact that I happened to major in Political Science, like, it does jack shit for me in this business [*laughs*] […] I think that people that come from different ethnic backgrounds than the sort of white American-are more focused on an outcome-a career outcome in their education than vice versa, where I think there's a luxury in the white community of, you go to college because that's just what we do. [*little laugh*]

ROD and WIB pointed out two kinds of filters that select out those with fewer resources: first, knowing that this career even exists and what the path into it might be (which ROD described as an issue for "diverse people" which is really an issue for anyone without the social and cultural capital to understand electoral production as a viable career path), and second, being willing and able to work for little or nothing.

[8] A disproportionate percentage of the campaign staff and consultants for whom I could find this information attended an undergraduate institution given one of the top scores for selectivity by Barons.

Paths to Positions

There are other parts of the process that also serve to restrict access for those with fewer resources. First, though, it is important to note the extent to which there is a clearly defined, fairly linear path into the higher echelons of campaign work. I outline that path below, then I will detail the ways each step along that path has the potential to limit participation from the less-advantaged. This path is not formalized: an undergraduate cannot access this information in the same way she could find out at least the rudiments of becoming a doctor or a lawyer, or to a lesser extent entering the business world. However, the paths my interviewees recounted having taken, as well as the paths they prescribed for others, were remarkably consistent.

MAC, for example, described his consternation when he found out that, despite having gone to college *and* graduate school at "two prestigious universities," and having worked on a Presidential campaign, he still had to start out his new job with a congressperson in Washington DC as an intern.

> You know, in politics, it's just like the private sector. There's a corporate ladder you gotta work you way up on and I think a lot of people sometimes come out to DC and […] they think, you know, their success is going to translate into success in this city, where it's just—again, it's hard work, dedication, willingness to do anything and who you know. And you know, you gotta work you way up.

The experience of TSK, the daughter of a Democratic politician, fits with this story. Despite her pedigree, she worked on the Obama campaign as a field organizer, a job she described getting through a friend rather than by reference to her family. She told me:

> there's a fairly clear path to sort of leadership within campaigns— it's not looked upon all that fondly if you try and skip, like, three levels. You know, from a field perspective they're pretty clear [that] everyone starts as an organizer. You move up to like a regional field director or field director and then from there you can transition into something that's more of a leadership role. […] I mean, I think sometimes you'll see folks who are able to kind of skip a step or jump ahead, you know, one level or something along those lines. But I think you really do need to put your time in and learn what it's like.

WIB's advice to aspiring "politicos" was to latch on to a local politician and move from there; my data indicate it is more common for people working at the national level to have started on a national campaign than in local politics, but these were the only two strategies or paths anyone I talked with described or advised, and two of only three paths that I found to be at all common (the third is going directly into consulting as an associate or assistant in a consulting firm).

> Yeah, I mean, if there's something you could scream from the rooftop when you're done with this, tell people if you want to get involved in politics, go to your local state senator and say,

> I'm going to work for you, because I know at some point you're going to run for Congress in this district, and if you run for Congress and you win, then I know at some point I can go with you to D.C. And if you're a fairly good Congressman, at some point you're probably going to run for Senate, you know? And, you know, it just kind of works from there. Or, at some point the person that you're working for is going to run into somebody that is on your way up, and you just build these connections. […] people are more than willing to take on help for free, if you're willing to give it.

Hurdles to Clear

Despite the widespread and fairly accurate perception that there are clear-cut paths into strategic campaign decision-making jobs, it is nonetheless difficult for those outside the world of campaigns to know how or where to begin. This lack of transparency about starting points is the first way in which the campaign world is especially inaccessible to those with fewer resources. Even with an understanding of what the first step in a campaign career might be, it is often difficult to secure a position that has the potential to lead to further steps along this path. Those positions, furthermore, are frequently unpaid or carry only a token salary, and often require moving. Even if one is able to identify such a position and has the resources to move and/or work for free, the hours required rival those for medical interns, without any guarantee about work after the campaign ends. Finally, the skills of those in low-level positions are judged by standards that are not laid out clearly in advance, and may in many cases be highly subjective. Below, I give my interviewees accounts of each of these steps and the ways they may serve to make this occupation as elite as others with more formal barriers to entry.

Knowing Where to Start

WIC came from a small college and a small town, and participated in a semester program in Washington, D.C. primarily because she did not think she could afford a semester abroad. She described arriving in DC and going to the job fairs organized by the DC program:

> So my goal was to get a job on the hill and do the thing and then go home and [I was] still trying to figure out what the hell you did with the political science degree. I mean, I still didn't get it. Like, I had no idea about any of these jobs [that] existed and about this world at all.

I asked her what she would say to an imaginary 18-year-old who wanted to get into working on campaigns, and she said:

> I would tell them not to do things the way I did them. I would tell them to become more aware of what is going on, both at the national level and in their state, and probably direct them towards, you know, just some of the resources, like the daily e-mails, [...] I mean, things I didn't know about until I got into the business, but that give you the 10-minute

> run-down each day of what is going on and who important people are.

But even people with more connections and resources often did not understand that a career path in campaigns existed, let alone how to get into this world. BEA told me:

> I just didn't go into politics right away, because I didn't know how to get into politics. In college, you know, there was no real—there are a number of reasons why I went into banking when I got out of college, but it's not all so—a lot of people don't know how to break into it, the business, make a living out of it. I had to research that. I had to study how to do that.

I asked CHM if she was "looking to get into political work after college? Did you know at that point?"

> No, I didn't know anything about it actually. [...] I was like clueless. [...] And I do remember being in the Career Services office at [her very selective, prestigious undergraduate institution] and someone [...] asking about, like, how do you get a job as a politician. I thought it was like just a ridiculous thing to ask. But I don't know—I don't think I even knew that people—like, how you would work on the campaign. I had no access to that world, and I took my [first job, at a government agency] because I was a good number cruncher, and I got an offer. [...] And even when I was in Washington, like when I first moved here, I didn't know anyone else that was working on the Hill, and they're very separate worlds—the political and then the federal government.

Many people I interviewed made comments that they "had no clue" about campaign work as a career. Some told me they "just fell into it" through friends or other connections; social networks played an important role for many of my interviewees, both for finding their first job and for moving up thereafter.

Using Connections

All but four of my interviewees recounted getting their first paid job in politics through a pre-existing connection; some had family or friends in politics growing up, others made connections through friends in college, and the rest started with internships during college that led to recommendations and their next jobs. Of the four who got jobs without internships or other networking, three were hired as junior associates by political consulting firms, and one moved to DC and canvassed the halls of Congress until someone eventually gave him a job.

A number of my interviewees, contra others' assertions about meritocracy, believed that most people got started in working in politics through direct personal connections. STB, for example, told me "I often meet people who have no connection to politics and have been really successful. And I always wonder how they did it." I asked GRJ if she felt like "some people have more family or personal connections that help them get into this world?" and she answered unequivocally: "Yes. I think that I'm probably more of the abnormal person who hadn't had sort of a direct [way to] get into it or direct experience having their

mom or dad take them out, sort of getting in the political world." I asked GEJ the same question, however, and he said: "No, I think that obviously helps, but no, that's a very defeatist way of looking at things." When I told him I initially heard this from someone who had connections and was successful (i.e., not someone making excuses) he said "It's about going into a situation and knocking on doors or showing that you have a talent or abilities that people need, and then they will—and, you know, things will work out. Worked out for me." But at a different point in the interview, he told me he got his first job on a campaign—as the luggage boy for a Presidential candidate in a primary—through a friend from college who was a political consultant. So while family connections are not necessary, connections or opportunities, most often cultivated during college, play a large role in campaign careers.

TSK described the importance of connections for landing meaningful roles on campaigns:

> But I think some of it is just almost like anything else—you just have to have the luck to sort of fall into something, or you have to know someone who's doing it. I think that that's probably the case in almost any profession, but certainly, I mean, relationships and knowing people is huge. I mean, that's how I got on the Obama campaign. That's how I got started initially, in formal campaigning, was through a friend of mine who was working on a campaign, and I just decided to go volunteer, and then, you know, went from there and then the relationships that I built there are the ones that sort of got me onto Obama and those relationships, obviously, are what got me into the administration and those are the relationships that if I wanted to keep going, I would use.

On the other hand, LUA was one of the few people I spoke to who got his first job by sending out a resume. He had transitioned from a job as a teacher to realizing he wanted to work in politics. He, like many of the people I interviewed, went for a Master's degree at the Georgetown University Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM). Unlike a number of people I spoke with (some who had, and some who had not, gotten degrees there), he felt that what he learned and the credential were genuinely useful to him.

> It was just the degree, you know, just being able to say I have this degree. I think. Just because it certainly wasn't connections, as you probably know, I'm kinda unique in that I went to [a small, elite liberal arts college] and I ended up becoming a Republican—well, I ended up becoming a conservative who works for Republicans [*laughs*]. But Georgetown wasn't all that different, in that I was like, the one token conservative Republican, and so I certainly didn't make many connections there in terms of work, [even though] I'm still very good friends with a lot of those people. But, as far as getting a job, no. But, I think, ultimately it was how you get any job, kept an eye on the wanted ads. I applied for one, and I think I was able to say I'm graduating with this degree, I know something, and they hired me.

LUA's job was at a consulting firm; based on both the experience of my interviewees and some analysis of my career data, it seems that it is easier to get associate-level jobs at consulting firms through sending out resumes than it is to get campaign jobs that way. This makes sense, as consulting firms are (more) stable organizations which can take time to screen resumes and hire in more standard ways. My analysis in Chapter 4, however, shows that those consultants who started in consulting firms, rather than in campaigns, are less likely to earn as much or work on as many national-level races when compared with those who started their political careers working directly for campaigns. LUA was at least somewhat aware of the deficit in his experience, having gone right from GSPM to a consulting firm (and from there to his current job) without ever working full-time on a campaign.

While a few people found success through LUA's route, generally with a prestigious college on their resume, MAK explicitly told me that finding a job in campaigns is "not one of these things where you send out blind resumes." He went on to tell me about his strategy for getting higher-level campaign jobs: "If you get a lead, you've gotta basically run a campaign to get that job, and you've gotta call people to serve as third-party advocates, you have to find out all the information you can about the status and what it is that you need to do, if anybody's out there beating you, what is it that you need to do better," all of which of course requires having those connections in the first place. He continued: "But a lot of [getting my job] had to do with cross-pollination, which was I knew a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy, and they all—next thing you know I found out I had five different avenues of access to this job and that was how I have it."

Not everyone was entirely aware of the role connections played in their first jobs. KAD started out volunteering for Obama in 2006, ended up spending a good deal of time with the candidate on the campaign trail, and secured an administration job after the election. His description of the path he took started out sounding a lot like the people who extolled the meritocratic nature of campaigns:

> You know, I really do think that the biggest thing is getting your foot in the door and getting a chance. Seriously. So, like, the people who volunteer to do something early on, okay, and just even put themselves in the position to be able to execute, even if they're not the best, but they're the ones who sort of assume responsibility for doing something, often get a lot of experience. I mean, for instance, I started on a Senate campaign, and I really did not have a personal referral.

Except, he continued:

> I mean, the then-Senator knew who I was because we are from the same community. I mean, he actually knew my mother, so there was a little bit of a personal connection, but he certainly didn't know much more than, Oh yeah, that's so-and-so's son.

So KAD got his "foot in the door" in part because he was "so-and-so's son," and may have been trusted with increased responsibility in some part because of his family connection. Nonetheless, his account of the importance of "getting in the door" conforms to what nearly everyone told me: that it requires some combination of connections, luck, and persistence even to get a volunteer position in a campaign. The next two stories illustrate the

importance of persistence.

Unlike LUA, DID (also a Republican) had a difficult time getting a first job in politics based on only his resume. His parents were immigrants who did not go to college, and he went to a substantially less prestigious undergraduate institution than LUA or my other two interviewees for whom the "blind resume" approach worked. His account deals with looking for jobs "on the Hill" rather than in campaigns or political consulting, but it highlights the difficulty of getting started without connections. When he decided he wanted to work in politics, he said he did it

> the only way I knew how, which was to update the resume, kind of walk the halls of Congress, hand it out, you know, I primarily kind of targeted [State] members, cause that was my home state and whatnot. But I ended up hitting, you know, probably about a hundred house offices and senate offices, and committees and whatnot, and eventually you know after doing that for maybe, maybe as long as a year, and not making a lot of headway, I talked to, I think someone in [Congressman X's] office. I kind of escalated it to doing it on Fridays and asking for meetings with people that were, you know, much like you, that were available. And [Congressman X's] Chief of Staff, I think it was, saw my resume, forwarded it along to [...] some of the committees, political committees. I interviewed, got the job, and, kind of… started.

A number of other people I talked with said it was nearly futile to send resumes in hopes of landing a political job; the key, whether on "The Hill" or in campaigns, is to show up in person, and to be willing to do whatever it takes.

Even a pre-existing connection is not always enough to guarantee a spot on a campaign. WIC told me the story of how she got her first job on a Presidential campaign:

> I had worked for [the candidate's] Leadership PAC in DC. Basically I was an intern and I did a lot of data entry. [...] So, they had asked me, when I left, Would you like to come work on the campaign? and I'm like 19, being asked on the steps of the Capitol if I want to work on the presidential campaign. And I about, you know, peed myself, and—of course! And I guess I had a lot of…maybe not misplaced faith in my boss at the internship, but a certain naiveté. I went back, finished the semester, and then [...] I quit school and then I was calling people on the phone, wasn't really getting any response and like, Shit, I quit school, you know, what am I supposed to do? So I drove to DC and I sat in the office until they talked to me again. […] then I was, like, Look, I quit school, I need to know, either I have a job or I don't. So I literally said, I need you to make a phone call and get me a job. [...] And one thing to do that I did is be persistent. [...] If nothing else, it showed them that I was serious and that I was willing to put forth the effort and [maybe they] thought well, you know, I mean, she's

> kind of crazy, but that's kind of what we need—is somebody who's willing to do whatever it takes and stick with it.

Characteristics of the Job

To simply get a first job in campaigns or other positions in national politics involves knowing that such jobs exist, finding a connection or an internship to get in the door, and if all else fails being incredibly persistent. Each of these requirements can clearly work to reduce access to this field, and the characteristics of first jobs are equally likely to, as SEJ put it, "weed out people who are either not that into it or not that good at it." They are also likely to weed out those who do not have the resources to sustain regular interstate moves, low or no pay, and near-constant uncertainty about the next job or source of income, especially while doing work that is anything but glamorous. MAC described his first job by saying "serfdom comes to mind." WIC told me, after her persistence was rewarded with a concrete job offer on the Presidential campaign:

> I packed my car and drove three days straight to New Hampshire and slept on [the state Director's] attic floor for about two weeks until I found an apartment. So it was an experience. [*both laugh*] It was an experience for someone who had just turned 21, and probably an experience for my mother as well, who found out that her youngest daughter had dropped out of school and was driving three days to New Hampshire from Florida with no winter clothes and nowhere to live and she said, How much are you making again? That does not sound like enough. [*laughs*]

When KAD first started on Obama's 2006 Senate campaign, a senior campaign staffer told him "'I'll make a deal with you: we can't pay you right now.' Because this was like two or three months before primary. But, [he said] 'Go ahead, if you're willing to volunteer and do this for a few months, if we win in March, then we'll find a way to pay you,'" which is what happened. If KAD had not had the resources to volunteer more than full-time for "two or three months," he would not have moved into a paid position. BLB, starting out over 30 years before KAD, had a similar experience: he said, "I had [to] do all the work for nothing, which a lot of people can't do." Like many I interviewed, he got started in college: "I was freshman in college. I didn't need to be paid. And that allowed me to spend time there and show my commitment and then, hopefully you can use your own wits about you to find other opportunities to eventually get on the payroll and then become important to people." KUL told me a nearly identical story, although he is 35 years younger than BLB and a Republican:

> So, like many, I'm one of those who got involved because I did some cheap labor for a small campaign [as a] college student. That's how a lot folks get involved and you just work your way up, working on different campaigns. At the beginning of it, it's certainly no money in it. But, you know, it was fun, I was a college student, I didn't really need money, right? You know, you can live on Ramen noodles.

Not only is the work often uncompensated, it is generally, as was discussed in Chapter 3, for very, very long hours. WIC told me more about her first job:

> And they told me you're going to work from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. seven days a week. Or no, it was six days a week for a couple months, and then we'll work 7 days a week and you'll be done whenever we end. You know, if we win or we lose, we're—I mean, that's what it is. You won't have vacation days, etcetera. And I said, Okay. And then, you know, I took out trash and I made copies and whatever it was. So what were those days like? I mean, then they quickly progressed to 9 o'clock, to 10 o'clock to 11, to midnight and got longer, which they don't tell you at the very beginning [*both laugh*] probably with good reason. I don't tell people that either.

The work pays little, the hours are incredibly long, and not only that, but often the most-junior staff are asked to do the least desirable tasks: to take out the garbage, get sandwiches, make copies, get dry-cleaning, and so on. In order to move into more responsible roles, they have to garner the notice and approval of those in more senior positions. My interviewees all described the attitude necessary to advance from the entry-level positions: you have to be willing to "do anything," even the smallest task, well, and without complaint. You have to learn from those around you, and you also have to be willing to "put yourself forward" to do what needs to be done, to take advantage of opportunities as they become available. This last is probably key; just as there is not much formal hiring in campaign work, there are also no formal policies for promotions. When a new role needs to be filled, more senior campaign staff look around for the most likely person to take on those duties, and presenting yourself as willing to take on any task, large or small, makes one an attractive candidate for advancement.

I discuss the mechanisms and consequences of these informal promotion procedures in more detail in Chapter 6, where I argue that they have implications for both the kinds of people who can advance in the field of electoral production, and on the kinds of products created in political campaigns.

Conclusion

Becoming a specialist in electoral production is no easy feat; even the lowest-level jobs in politics require some combination of political connections, a privileged background, and perseverance. There are many factors that make it difficult to become a "campaign professional": many people do not even know such an occupation exists; it is not easy to even get a responsible *volunteer* job on a campaign, let alone to move from a volunteer to a staff position; most positions are acquired informally, through networks rather than "blind" resumes and interviews; much campaign work requires self-funded short- and medium-term moves to far-flung states; and the entry-level jobs themselves generally entail long hours of work for low pay and little recognition. These features of the field of electoral production make gaining entry into campaign work especially difficult for those without financial resources (to facilitate weeks or months of little or no pay, to weather the inherent uncertainty, and to finance moves) or pre-existing ties to more-established campaign workers (to find out about and get placed in positions in the first place). They also work to filter out those who are not deeply committed to being part of campaigns, and to inculcate in those who stay the perception, discussed in Chapter 3, that they are part of a small and exclusive club.

These features of the field of electoral production point to two conclusions. First,

they explain why the campaign workers' demographic profile is similar to established elite professions, despite its relative newness and the lack of formal barriers to entry. Campaign decision-makers and political consultants are disproportionately white, male, and well-educated when compared with the population as a whole, and with the partisan base out of which they come. They are also, then demographically quite different from the potential voters with whom they must engage during campaigns. In other words, not only are our political representatives not particularly similar to their constituencies, the key people mediating their communications during elections are equally, and in some measures more, socially distant from the electorate.

Second, the effectiveness of the barriers to becoming a political producer provides additional evidence that it makes sense to think about the space of electoral specialists as a field, located within the field of power. Most roles in national campaigns beyond the massive phone-banking, door-to-door canvassing, and data-entry operations where walk-in volunteers are deployed, are available only to those who know someone and/or who can dedicate 60, 70, even 90 hours a week for little or no pay. In other words, although the hurdles aspiring "politicos" must clear are not the same as those erected around more traditional "professions," they have a similar effect of limiting membership to a highly-selected group, and thereby ensuring that access to the particular kind of power on offer in that field is secured members only.

Table 1: Gender Composition of Elite Occupations

	Percent Male
Architects and Engineers [a]	86.4%
Bi-Partisan Consultants 1999 [b]	83.6%
Republican Consultants 1999 [b]	82.6%
111th Congress [c]	82.2%
Democratic Consultants 1999 [b]	78.7%
Republican Consultants 2010 [d]	77.9%
Republican Top Campaign Staff [d]	77.2%
Chief Executives [a]	75.8%
Democratic Consultants 2010 [d]	72.0%
Lawyers [a]	68.1%
Physicians and Surgeons [a]	66.2%
Democratic Top Campaign Staff	61.0%
Total Labor Force [a]	53.1%

[a] Bureau of Labor Statistics, TED: The Editor's Desk. 2011. "Women as a percent of total employed in selected occupations, 2011." http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted_20120501_data.htm (Accessed May 10, 2013).

[b] Thurber, James A., Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio. 1999. *Survey of Political Consultants*. Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, American University.

[c] Amer, Mildred, and Jennifer E. Manning. 2008. *Membership of the 111th Congress: A Profile*. Congressional Research Service. http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/R40086_20081231.pdf.

[d] Laurison, Daniel. 2013. *Politicos Dataset*. Original data, described in Chapter 2.

Table 2: Racial Compositions of Elite Occupations

	Percent White
Democratic Consultants 1999 [b]	97.2%
Republican Consultants 1999 [b]	95.8%
Republican Top Campaign Staff [d]	95.6%
Republican Consultants 2010 [d]	94.1%
Bi-Partisan Consultants 1999 [b]	92.4%
Chief Executives [a]	90.5%
Lawyers [a]	90.3%
Democratic Consultants 2010 [d]	86.7%
Architects [a]	85.1%
111th Congress [c]	84.3%
Democratic Top Campaign Staff [d]	78.7%
Total Labor Force [a]	74.5%

[a] Chambliss, Elizabeth, and American Bar Association Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession. 2004. *Miles to go: progress of minorities in the legal profession*. American Bar Association, Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession.

[b] Thurber, James A., Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio. 1999. *Survey of Political Consultants*. Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, American University.

[c] Amer, Mildred, and Jennifer E. Manning. 2008. *Membership of the 111th Congress: A Profile*. Congressional Research Service. http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/R40086_20081231.pdf.

[d] Laurison, Daniel. 2013. *Politicos Dataset*. Original data, described in Chapter 2.

Table 3: Class Categories and Graduate Degrees

	Percentwith Graduate Degree [a]	N in category [a]	Percent-age of Pop-ulation [a]	Percent-age of Inter-viewees	N of Inter-viewees
Upper Professional And Large Proprietors	40.8%	763	8.6%	43%	12
Lower Professional, Supervisors Of Non-Manual Employees	22.1%	1,355	15.3%	29%	8
Lower-Grade Technicians; Supervisors Of Manual Workers	11.9%	1,340	15.1%	0%	0
Routine Non-Manual Employees, Higher Grade (Administration And Commerce)	2.7%	1,147	13.0%	0%	0
Small Proprietors, Artisans, Etc., With Employees	7.0%	357	4.0%	4%	1
Small Proprietors, Artisans, Etc., Without Employees	1.9%	428	4.8%	4%	1
Skilled Manual Workers	1.1%	905	10.2%	18%	5
Semi-Skilled And Unskilled Manual Workers (Not In Agriculture, Etc.)	0.5%	1,484	16.8%	4%	1
Routine Non-Manual Employees, Lower Grade (Sales And Services)	0.7%	955	10.8%	0%	0
Farm (Owners And Workers)	1.8%	114	1.3%	0%	0
Total	*9.7%*	*8848*	*100%*	*100%*	*28*

[a] My analysis from General Social Survey Cumulative File, only years 2004-2008.

Table 4: Racial Composition of Democratic Campaign Workers and Partisans

	Percent White	Percent Black	Non-Missing N	Total N
Independent [a]	63.5%	10.8%	1,790	1,790
Independent, Lean Democrat [a]	68.4%	14.3%	1,070	1,070
Weak Democrat [a]	59.6%	21.3%	1,571	1,571
Strong Democrat [a]	56.6%	32.5%	1,545	1,545
Very Politically Interested Democrats [a]	64.4%	26.9%	104	104
Lower-Level and Local Staff [b]	78.0%	13.1%	245	677
Mid-Level, State and National Staff [b]	76.0%	10.4%	338	650
Top-Level State and National Staff [b]	78.7%	11.9%	428	657
Consultants [b]	86.7%	4.8%	83	217
Chairs, Advisors, Committee Members [b]	66.3%	23.9%	92	236

[a] My analysis from General Social Survey Cumulative File, only years 2004-2008.

[b] Laurison, Daniel. 2013. *Politicos Dataset*. Original data, described in Chapter 2.

Table 5: Racial Composition of Republican Campaign Workers and Partisans

	Percent White	Percent Black	Non-Missing N	Total N
Independent [a]	63.5%	10.8%	1,790	1,790
Independent, Lean Republican [a]	84.2%	4.9%	728	728
Weak Republican [a]	89.0%	2.1%	1,365	1,365
Strong Republican [a]	92.0%	2.4%	1,093	1,093
Very Politically Interested Republicans [a]	91.4%	0.0%	81	81
Lower-Level and Local Staff [b]	95.2%	2.4%	83	593
Mid-Level, State and National Staff [b]	93.3%	3.7%	135	492
Top-Level State and National Staff [b]	95.6%	0.4%	228	444
Consultants [b]	94.1%	1.0%	101	141
Chairs, Advisors, Committee Members [b]	96.3%	0.5%	191	465

[a] My analysis from General Social Survey Cumulative File, only years 2004-2008.

[b] Laurison, Daniel. 2013. *Politicos Dataset*. Original data, described in Chapter 2.

Table 6: Racial, Gender, Educational, and Age Composition Across Campaign Roles

		Percent White	Percent Male	Percent with Grad Degree	Average Age	N
Management	Democrats	79.5%	64.2%	48.3%	40.7	356
	Republicans	97.3%	75.0%	24.2%	37.1	304
Communications	Democrats	78.7%	52.5%	30.3%	35.3	274
	Republicans	92.3%	69.2%	22.0%	34.3	201
Political	Democrats	57.5%	54.5%	56.5%	37.3	301
	Republicans	85.7%	72.4%	32.0%	37.8	282
Field	Democrats	77.5%	57.9%	30.9%	35.9	539
	Republicans	94.4%	72.6%	32.1%	39.7	315
Operations	Democrats	81.8%	48.9%	58.7%	40.1	92
	Republicans	100.0%	44.3%	66.7%	37.0	106
Finance	Democrats	77.4%	50.8%	32.5%	38.5	130
	Republicans	94.9%	62.1%	29.8%	45.8	131
Scheduling-Advance	Democrats	81.4%	45.0%	29.3%	31.4	133
	Republicans	92.3%	38.8%	21.7%	39.8	73
Policy	Democrats	70.0%	62.3%	80.7%	41.4	77
	Republicans	97.1%	90.9%	75.6%	54.0	55
Internet-New Media	Democrats	88.5%	77.2%	20.7%	29.0	151
	Republicans	93.8%	83.7%	5.0%	39.7	48
Research	Democrats	85.7%	76.9%	43.8%	32.5	53
	Republicans	100.0%	66.7%	29.4%	43.8	44

Note: from Laurison, Daniel. 2013. *Politicos Dataset*. Original data, described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5: Mapping the Space

Introduction

In this chapter, my goal is to describe some essential features of the field of American specialists in electoral production. Although my dataset of career biographies is the most comprehensive compilation of information about all sorts of political producers' backgrounds and trajectories, it is lacking in information on two key aspects of this field: I was not able to gather any data on incomes, and my data on educational attainment is unavoidably incomplete. Since income and education are key social differentiators, indicators or components of cultural and economic capital, no study of a world of work, let alone a field, would be complete without them. So, in this chapter, I draw on the largest and most comprehensive study of any portion of the field of electoral production: the Survey of Political Consultants conducted by political scientists at American University (Thurber, Nelson, and Dulio 1999). Data from this survey enable analyses of the kinds of skills and attributes that contribute to success in political consulting, the important oppositions in the field, and the relationship between consultants' positions and their reported opinions about campaigning and politics.

It is important to understand the *entire* field of political producers, especially on national-level campaigns, as their main job. As I argued in the introduction, work that focuses only on consultants necessarily misses all the campaign operatives without their own consulting firms, many of whom nonetheless play equally important roles in shaping the tone and content of American campaigns. However, consultants are certainly key actors in this field, and generally some of the best-remunerated and most senior; many of them are campaign staff who have "graduated" to consulting.

Below I discuss the advantages and limitations of using these data for this purpose. The chapter then proceeds with three complementary analyses. I begin by using Multiple Correspondence Analysis to construct a representation of the space of political consultants in 1999. I next use ordered logistic regression and negative binomial regression to tease out the factors that are most strongly associated with success[9] in political consulting. Finally, I return to the space constructed using MCA, this time projecting supplementary variables relating to consultants' views of candidates, the electorate, and political ethics into the space to show how the opinions consultants express regarding their work vary with their positions in the field.

Previous Work on Consultants

Data from the Survey of Political Consultants, as well as other studies, has revealed a good deal about the professed motivations of political consultants, their relationships with each other, with parties, and with candidates, and their views of the electorate. However, while much has been written about the careers and paths to success of elected officials (e.g. Fox and Lawless 2004; Matthews 1984), we still know very little about the rules, location and structure of the field of political prodution. The only research to date relevant to these questions simply reviews the business models and revenue-generating activities of political consulting firms (Grossmann 2009a, 2009b), and shows that firms with more wins in one cycle, especially in contested races, move to more central positions in the network of

[9] There are two outcomes that might be called "success" or "doing better" for political consultants—their success in their careers, or their ability to win races. This paper is not concerned about the outcomes electoral contests; when I refer to consultants' "success" or "doing better" I mean the extent to which they are able to earn more money or work on more races, *not* whether those races win or lose.

political consulting firms in future cycles (Montgomery and Nyhan 2010). Further, it is clear from this strand of research that the use of consultants, and the choice of specific consultants, makes a difference in political campaign outcomes. Hiring a consultant increases a candidate's total financial receipts and chance of winning; hiring a top consultant - one judged well-known or effective by his or her peers—brings in even more money and ultimately more votes as well, even after controlling for money and other factors of the race and the candidate (Dulio 2005). Thanks to this work we know a good deal about the professed motivations of political consultants, their relationships with journalists, parties, and candidates, and their views of the electorate.

Studies of other fields of symbolic production (Pierre Bourdieu 1993; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Peterson and Anand 2004), of the political field in other countries (Pierre Bourdieu 1991b; Denord et al. 2011; Hjellbrekke et al. 2007), and of other parts of the United States political field (Medvetz 2008, 2012) tend to show that the structure of the field influences the approach individuals and organizations take to creating cultural objects, as well as (what is essentially the same thing) their strategies for advancing within their field. However, no work has yet examined the structure of the field of political producers, or even the space of political consultants within that field. The task for this chapter, then is to understand what predicts success among individual consultants, and patterns of their views of their enterprise.

Below, I use Multiple Correspondence Analysis to describe the key oppositions in the field; and then show whether and how these oppositions structure consultants' opinions about voters, politics, and campaigns. I use regression to identify the correlates of relative success in this field , which should indicate the ways that consultants are judged by campaigns and by each other, and thus illuminate some of the processes behind the production of electoral politics in the United States (Pierre Bourdieu 1991b)[10]. These analyses together provide necessary information for understanding the kinds of cultural objects being produced by political consultants and campaigns.

Data & Descriptive Statistics

I use data from the 1999 survey of senior-level political consultants described in Chapter 2. Before turning to more complicated analyses, it is worth examining the demographic composition of political consultants when the survey was taken. Table 1 displays summary statistics for all the variables used in these studies; the first two columns of Table 2 also report the number and percentage of consultants in each of the categories of the questions used to produce the Multiple Correspondence Analysis of the field of political consultants. The median age of consultants in this survey was 45; the average career at that point had been 18 years long, and over 90% of consultants had been in politics at least 7 years. As noted by other studies based on this data (Dulio 2005, Dulio and Nelson 2004), the field was overwhelmingly white (95.5%), college-educated (90%), and male (82%). Political consultants were remarkably well-educated: 98% had at least some college, as compared with only 46% of the over-25 population at the time[11]; 39.5% had a graduate degree of some sort, and an additional 10.3% had attended some graduate school without earning a degree. As

[10] "To gain a complete understanding of the political discourses that are on offer in the market at a given moment […] we would have to analyze the entire process of production of the professionals of ideological production, starting with the […] frequently implicit definition of the desired competence, which designates them for these functions […]" (Pierre Bourdieu, in *Language and Symbolic Power,* 1991. p.176)

[11] My calculation from 2000 General Social Survey

there are no formal certification procedures or educational requirements for political consulting, the high education level is worth noting.

[Table 1: Descriptive Statistics about here]

The survey asked about a number of facets of consultants' work experience and career trajectory, as well as asking about their age, education, race, and gender. The primary question throughout this chapter is whether and how different kinds of experience, education, or ascriptive characteristics affect consultants' relative levels of success and influence in their field; the next question is how and whether relative positions shape consultants' views.

Since it is not feasible to study consultants' status or influence on particular campaigns directly (Montgomery and Nyhan 2010; Panagopoulos, Dulio, and Brewer 2011), I rely on two key indicators of success. First, I look at the number of races consultants have worked on at the national level, because participating in more races, and especially in more higher-level races, means contributing strategies and products (mailers, ads, speeches, etc.) that will be distributed to and experienced by more people. Second, I look at consultants' income from their political consulting work, based on the assumption that those who are being paid more, controlling for the number of races they are working on, are either playing larger roles in the campaigns on which they are working, or are working on better-funded, more competitive races (which should again have larger audiences)[12].

One kind of experience many consultants have had is working in other political capacities: for elected officials, party organizations, or directly on campaigns as staff. Having ever worked for a party and for an elected official are simple binary variables; as can be seen in Table 1, 53 percent had worked for office-holders and 45 percent for parties. Less than a third—only 29.8 percent—had never worked for either a party or an elected official. Many consultants also come from other fields; the only non-electoral industry asked about in this survey was work in print and broadcast media. In the regression analyses, I combined the questions about experience in broadcast and print news to created a single binary variable for media experience: 35.1 percent had worked for either broadcast or print news. In the multiple correspondence analysis, I kept these two variables separate.

The timing and type of work done at the start of a career in politics is also important. This survey did not ask directly whether a consultant had *ever* worked as campaign staff; the best available question instead asked whether consultants' *first* paid campaign work was as a campaign staffer, a consultant, or both. Given the relatively high income and stability of consulting compared with campaign staff work (Johnson 2001), it seems unlikely that many consultants move from consulting to staffing; none of the people I interviewed who had started their careers in politics in consulting firms had ever left to work full time on a campaign, although many thought the experience would be valuable. Starting out in paid campaign work as staff rather than a consultant means that that first experience was as part of a team working intensely together towards a single goal every day for a period of months or longer, rather than as an expert or service-provider participating from afar. I use a binary variable coded 1 if a consultant started out solely as a staffer and 0 otherwise; 54.5 percent of

[12] Consultants may also earn more if they win more; in addition to the likely indirect effects of wins on a consultant's appeal to potential campaign clients, 66 percent of consultants reported receiving "win bonuses" (Grossmann 2009a); thus, these models may indirectly capture some attributes of consultants who are winning more races, although that is not the purpose of this paper.

national-level senior consultants reported starting their work in politics as campaign staff. The age at which a career in campaign work began may also affect consultants' trajectories or views. Those who first worked with campaigns—whether as a staff member or as a consultant—by their mid-20s will have had little time to do other kinds of work before getting involved in politics. I calculated the age at first campaign work from the reported year of first paid political work and the consultant's age the year of the survey, and then created both a binary variable[13] split at the median (so those whose first campaign job was when they were 25 or younger are coded as 1), and a categorical variable for the multiple correspondence analysis.

Educational attainment and ascriptive characteristics also influence career trajectories in most professional fields (Cech et al. 2011; e.g. Cox and Harquail 1991; Feagin 1991; Hagan and Kay 1995; Kornrich 2009; Petersen and Saporta 2004), so I include indicators of race, education, and sex[14]. I also include controls for other aspects of the consultants' work and careers which might affect occupational outcomes: the number of years since they had their first paid campaign job, membership in the American Association of Political Consultants, their party, their status in their firm (principal vs. senior associate), their specialty, and whether they work for commercial as well as political clients.

Constructing a Representation of the Field of Political Consultants

In order to generate a comprehensive depiction of the field of political consultants in the United States, I used Multiple Correspondence Analysis (see Le Roux and Rouanet 2009). Studying a field requires "applying the relational mode of thinking encapsulated by the notion of field, [in order to] set out in each particular case to uncover empirically the specific configurations assumed by the complexus of oppositions that structure" the field of interest (Wacquant, in Pierre Bourdieu 1996b, xiii). MCA does exactly this; it has thus been used by scholars since Bourdieu to study a number of other fields, including central bankers (Lebaron 2008), and the Norwegian field of power (Denord et al. 2011; Hjellbrekke et al. 2007). MCA can reveal how a field is structured as well as the location of individuals in that field. Instead of analyzing how variables each matter with "all else held constant" as in regression analyses, the approach makes it possible to see the how the salient modalities operate together, and then examine the distributions of opinions across the constructed representation of a field or social space.

A cloud of individuals is constructed such that the distance between any two individual points in the space (which can have very high dimensionality) indicates the dissimilarity of those individuals' responses to the response categories used in constructing the space. Individuals with identical answers to all questions would be located at the same point; individuals with no overlap whatsoever will be quite distant from one another, and more distant the less their responses are shared by others.

Another feature of MCA is that it does not rely on (or even take into account) any ordering of the categories within a given question. After the clouds of individuals and categories are constructed, they are then projected onto the principal axes in such a way as to maximize the variance expressed by each axis (see Le Roux 2010 pp. 24-28). These axes are

[13] Models are robust to using the continuous variable, but I use the dummy both for ease of interpretation and because most of the effect is in the difference between those who started quite close to college age or younger, and everyone else.

[14] Because one of the independent variables (starting early) is a combination of consultant's age and one of the control variables (time in politics), I do not include age as a separate variable to avoid collinearity.

interpreted by examining both the "contributions" of different modalities to these axes as well as the coordinates of the categories in planes created by the principal axes. In order to decide how many axes to retain for interpretation, one must look at three factors: the pattern of decreasing eigenvalues of the axes, the "cumulated modified rates" (of variance, shown below in Table 1), and equally as important, the interpretability of the axes (Le Roux 2010:51). Axes are interpreted by examining the contributions of the various categories to each axis; categories which contribute a greater percentage of the variance than the "average" category are included in the analysis, with those categories with the largest contributions dominating the interpretation[15].

The principal axes determine how the clouds are projected into two-dimensional "maps." Distances on these maps indicate which categories have the most and least in common with other categories. Categories near the middle of a space are more common and/or more heterogeneous in terms of the other categories; those near the edges are less common and/or have less in common with other categories. Categories distant from one another in the space have few if any members in common; categories close to one another have many members in common. Once the representation of the field of consultants (in this case) has been carried out, it will be possible to see the distribution of their origins, and of their opinions about politics (as well as any other characteristics of interest) within this space. These "supplemental" categories—questions and answer choices not used to construct the space—are "projected" into the cloud of categories; each category's coordinates are determined by, essentially, averaging the coordinates of all respondents who chose that category (plus a translation factor related to the eigenvalue of the axis).

This portion of the analysis seeks to answer two questions: what are the key oppositions in the field of political consultants? And what attributes or origins structure those oppositions?

In order to represent field of political consultants, I used variables which describe major aspects of consultants' position in their field: their type of work, career history, and current position. As is customary in MCA, I tried a number of combinations of active questions and recodings of the categories in order to achieve a stable representation of the data (one not overly affected by small changes in recodings), a well-balanced one (such that very small categories are not exerting undue influence on the principal axes), and one with a relatively high level of total variance captured by the first few axes. I settled on 13 questions with 37 active categories. Table 2 includes the frequencies and percentages for each modality, as well as its contributions to Axes 1 and 2 and coordinates on those axes.

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[15] More formally, there are four mathematical steps:

> *Step 1:* Given two individuals i and i' and a question q, if both individuals choose the same response category, the part of distance [between their points in the space] due to question q is zero; if individual i chooses category j and individual i' chooses category $j' \neq j$, the part of (squared) distance due to question q is $d^2_q(i, i') = 1/f_j + 1/f_{j'}$, where f_j and f_j, are the proportions of individuals choosing j and j', respectively. The overall distance $d(i, i')$ is then defined by $d^2(i, i') = 1/Q \, \Sigma_q \, d^2_q(i, i')$ (see Le Roux and Rouanet 2004a). Once the distance between individuals is determined, the cloud of individuals is determined.
>
> *Step 2:* The principal axes of the cloud are determined (by orthogonal least squares), and a principal subspace is retained.
>
> *Step 3:* The principal cloud of individuals is studied geometrically, exhibiting approximate distances between individuals.
>
> *Step 4:* The *cloud of categories* consists of J category points. [J is the number of active modalities or response categories]. (Greenacre 2006)

[Table 2: Questions, Categories, Contributions and Coordinates About Here]

Type of work includes : Specialty (Direct Mail, Fundraiser, General Consultant, Media Consultant, Pollster; other, less frequent, specialties were made passive), Type of Clients (Commercial & Political or Only Political). *Career History* includes: First Campaign Role (Campaign Staff or Consultant; other less frequent categories were made passive), and a series of binary yes/no variables indicating whether the consultant ever worked for an elected official, a political party, or print or broadcast news organizations. Finally, *Current Position* includes: income from consulting (5 categories in $50,000 increments), number of national races worked on in the last 3 cycles (including presidential, senate, governor's and house races, divided four roughly even groups among those with at least one race), number of lower-level state and local races worked on in last three cycles (divided into those who did no lower-level races, and then into four roughly even groups for the rest), and whether they had ever received assistance from a Party committee (as an indicator of the quality of the races the consultant has worked on, because parties generally only offer assistance to races they believe are competitive and important).

Key Oppositions Among Political Consultants

I retain only the first two axes for interpretation; together, they describe over 74% of the variance of the clouds; the third axis meets some criteria for interpretation, but primarily opposes those with media experience to those without, and is therefore substantively less interesting.

[Table 3: Eigenvalues and Figure 1: Active Categories and Individuals]

The categories with contributions to each axis above the threshold for interpretation have their contributions indicated in bold in Table 2. The first axis describes an opposition between the dominant and the dominated or aspiring political consultants. Generally, those at the top (of the field as well as in Figure 1), earn the most money, work on the most races, and possess key field-specific capitals in the form of experience working for elected officials, having started out working on campaigns, and membership in the American Association of Political Consultants (AAPC). The bottom of the figure (and the field) is defined by lacking each of those attributes, as well as never having received assistance on a race from a party organization, and being only a senior associate, rather than a principal, in a consulting firm.

The second axis describes an opposition between the more politically-oriented consultants, on the right, and more commercially-oriented ones on the left. The political pole includes consultants who started out on campaigns, have worked for party organizations, who only work with political clients, who work on relatively few races, and whose specialties are fundraising or general consulting (both skills not readily transferable to commercial organizations). The commercial pole is those who started as consultants, have never worked for a party or an elected official, work on large numbers of races each cycle, and specialize in either polling or direct mail. This opposition has some affinity with what Bourdieu called the *autonomous* and *heteronomous* poles of many fields of cultural production, respectively; however it would not be fully accurate to describe any part of the consulting field as *autonomous*: the more political side of the field overlaps other parts of the political

field (parties and elected officials)[16]. Still, it appears from some of the results discussed below that more commercial principles indeed motivate those on the left side of the figure, and more purely political principles operate on the right[17].

Structuring Factors

Now that we have a reasonable construction of the field of political consultants, and a depiction of the key oppositions (dominant/dominated or successful/striving on the first, vertical axis and political/commercial on the second), we can ask what differences among consultants structure positions in this field. Figure 2 shows a number of attributes of consultants and their career trajectories projected as supplemental categories into the same plane depicted in Figure 1.

[Figure 2: Structure of the Field]

The most striking result in Figure 2 is the strong, monotonic relationship between consultants' age when they began work in politics and their current position in the field; this is neither simply the necessary precursor to longer experience in politics (as can be seen by the less consistent pattern for years in politics) nor an effect of age (which is not shown in this figure, but which follows no clear pattern in the space). People of color and women are located in the dominated portion of the space, along with those who have spent less than ten years in politics; the vertical distances between women and men, and between whites and non-whites, are each slightly above .4, which means it is reasonable to treat these as important differences. These findings, combined with the position of starting out in politics as campaign staff (rather than as a consultant) in Figure 1, support the conclusion from Chapter 1 that dominant positions generally accrue to those from relatively privileged backgrounds. Because working on a campaign is intrinsically a high-risk career move, the characteristics of entry-level political work make it an unlikely choice for someone without both a deep passion for politics and some pre-existing connections to political actors. Campaigns are necessarily time-limited, and while a winning campaign may lead to jobs with the newly-elected official or in further campaigns, working on a losing campaign has fewer potential rewards. Furthermore, working as an entry-level staffer on a political campaign normally pays only subsistence wages for round-the-clock work (Watson and Campbell 2003). We know from multiple studies of political interest that young people who are deeply interested in electoral politics are also disproportionately male, white, and from well-off, well-educated families (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). It is thus quite likely that starting early and starting out working on campaigns are greatly facilitated by coming from a better-off family, although this question requires further empirical validation.

[16] In the MCA and Social Network Analysis presented in Chapter 3, using my own data, I discuss the location of the field of political consultants vis a vis other parts of the field of power much more extensively.

[17] I also constructed separate MCAs for each party; there are some differences in the structure of each party's space of consultants (most notably, the first axis of difference among Republicans is the commercial-political axis, and the second axis captures status/dominance differences), but the character of the axes and most of the key correspondences obtain among both groups: income and number of national races move together, working for parties and electeds is more common among those who only work for political clients, etc.

On the other hand, Figure 2 shows that there is little relationship between education and position in the field; this is surprising, as education and other types of cultural capital are strongly associated with success in most fields. It appears instead that this is a field that rewards internally-generated capitals, social capital and dispositions acquired through years of direct experience in campaigns. Further, Figure 2 indicates that those who enter political consulting without a passion for politicking—who recall their initial motivation as being monetary—are far less successful than those who report becoming consultants for the thrill of competition, to help their party or further their political beliefs, or even to gain power and influence. Finally, Axis 2 separates those who entered consulting for either money or thrills from those who did it to help their party, lending support to the interpretation of this as a commercial-political axis; women and people of color are also centered on the pure-politics side of Axis 2. In the next section, I explore the relationships between origins, career history, and success further using multivariate regression techniques.

Modeling Success

While the MCA and analysis of the structuring factors in the field of political consultants shows which attributes and experiences most often go together, and thus gives a good overall picture of the field, regression helps to understand the extent to which specific factors shape career success. Below, I model both the numbers of races on which consultants report having worked and also the income they report earning from their political consulting work. I use all the indicators of political experience and connectedness available in the data, as well as controls for gender, race, education, specialty, and firm attributes.

Because no failed political consultants are included in the survey, I am modeling what predicts *greater* success—more income and more clients—among consultants who were able to sustain a political consulting practice at least long enough to be listed in a directory, randomly selected for survey participation, and contacted. The survey asked about the number of Presidential, Senate, House and Governor's races (from here, simply referred to as "national" races) as well as the number of other state and local races (referred to as "state" races below) in each of the three election cycles preceding the survey (1994, 1996, and 1998). The models presented below use the total of national races across the three cycles as the dependent variable in order to capture the relatively stable factors influencing client numbers, rather than the vicissitudes of individual cycles. The number of races an individual consultant reported working on tended to increase slightly every two years, but was otherwise fairly consistent from one cycle to the next: the national races combined number has a Cronbach's Alpha of .84. Because the number of races is a count, I modeled the determinants of the total number of races each consultant had worked using negative binomial regression. While both Poisson and negative binomial models are appropriate for count data, the negative binomial fits this data better as there is significant over-dispersion, i.e. the variance the numbers of races variable exceeds its mean.

Income was measured with a 5-category question[18] in $50,000 increments from "Under $50,000" to "Over $200,000," and only referred to income from political consulting. Half of all consultants reported making over $100,000 in the preceding year; fully 25 percent

[18] While this is not what most sociologists would consider a great way to measure income, there is nonetheless enough variation to get some purchase on the ways that financial rewards are distributed amongst this group.

made less than $50,000 from consulting, while over 20 percent made more than $200,000[19]. Since income was recorded as an ordered categorical variable, I used ordered logistic regression to model the distribution of monetary rewards in this field. A likelihood-ratio test showed that the parallel regression assumption is not violated for this data. I modeled income using a number of functional forms, and the results reported below are extremely robust to model specification—each statistically significant result had the same sign as that reported below, and was either significant at the .05 level or at least at the .10 level in each of the other models[20].

Results

Table 4 shows the models for the number of national races (column 1) and income (column 2). These results indicate that the factors that matter most for success in political consulting are the start of the career, political experience, race, and gender. Greater education, on the other hand, has no statistically significant effect in the regression models, and appeared in the MCA to in fact be somewhat negatively associated with relative success or dominance. Other variables with significant effects are harder to interpret causally, but it is clear that people with deep and wide experience in electoral politics tend to earn more money and work on more races than those without it. It should be noted that working on greater numbers of races, especially national races, predicts higher income; thus, anything that is associated with consultants having more clients should also indirectly increase their income.

[Table 4 - Models of Consulting Income and Number of National Races - About here]

Turning first, then, to predicted effects on the number of national races for which a consultant reports having worked across the three previous election cycles, we see that starting early in politics—having worked for a political campaign in a paid capacity by age

[19] Only 10 percent of respondents reported income between $150,000 and $200,000 per year; to improve model fit this category was combined with the top category, resulting in a 4-category dependent variable (see next note).

[20] Models included Ordinary Least Squares (with the income categories transformed to their median dollar amount and the highest category coded as $225,000), multinomial logistic regression, stereotype logistic regression. The ordered logistic model provided the best fit using the Bayes Information Criterion (BIC) as well as greater parsimony than the other models. The main difference in results for using the 4-category income variable versus models with the full five categories is that the p-value for "started on a campaign" goes to .056, and, more importantly, the parallel regression assumption is violated. Four-category stereotype logistic regression gives results that are substantively identical to ordered logistic regression with four categories; multinomial logistic regression models using five categories for income gave coefficients that were in the same direction as ordered logistic regression and stereotype logistic regression models, and each of the variables that reached statistical significance in the ordered-logistic models presented here was significantly different from the base (lowest income) category for at least one and usually two or three of the higher-income categories, with one exception—starting on a campaign never reached significance ($p<.17$ for the highest income category). While OLS is clearly a poor fit for either a 5- or 4-category dependent variable, the results from OLS regressions on both the four- and five-category income variables show the same relationships as the ordered logistic regression: both the signs and the significance of all the covariates are consistent across both models. Results from all other models are available upon request.

25—predicts an increase of nearly just over five races over the three cycles[21], net of other factors including the total number of years since the consultant's first paid campaign job. On the other hand, having worked for media predicts a *decrease* in national races of about four fewer national races across the three cycles, or more than one fewer races per year than otherwise-similar consultants *without* media experience; this is further evidence that it is specifically political experience that is valued in political consultants, even though work in media is clearly relevant to much of campaigning.

Membership in the American Association of Political Consultants is also associated with an estimated increase of 5.3 national races over the three election cycles, all else held equal. AAPC membership should facilitate connections among consultants (the AAPC regularly sponsors conferences, get-togethers, and awards ceremonies). However, it is not possible with these data to discern whether more-successful consultants are simply more likely to join the AAPC, rather than AAPC membership itself conferring any sort of benefit.

Turning to the model of income, two specific kinds of political experience predict higher earnings. The predicted reward in income for having worked for an elected official translates into a nearly 12 percent predicted increase in the likelihood of earning over $150,000, or a move from a 20.7 percent to a 32.4 percent predicted likelihood of earning over $150,000 *ceteris parabis*. Similarly, having started as campaign staff (not in a consulting firm) increases the predicted likelihood of being in the top income category by over 10 percent, and reduces the predicted likelihood of earning under $50,000 by 7.7 percent. All the variables that predict higher incomes do so *net* of the number of races a consultant is working on, indicating that consultants who started as campaign staff or have worked for elected officials are, on average, earning more per race.

There are also clearly gender and racial differences in the numbers of national races otherwise-similar political consultants are hired to work on, and the income they make doing so. Men reported working on average just over 5 more races than otherwise-similar women, and are 10.3 percent more likely to earn over $150,000. The estimated benefit for whites over the fairly small number of people of color in the sample was nearly 6 races, or two national-level races each cycle. While these are not surprising findings for sociologists, they are worth noting especially because of the common belief among political operatives I interviewed that "anyone" can make it if they only work long and hard enough. On the other hand, the lack of effect of education is somewhat surprising. I confirmed the lack of relationship between education and success with likelihood ratio tests comparing models with and without education variables; the lack of effect was consistent across every model and variable construction I tried (except a few where graduate degrees were actually statistically significantly negatively associated with income). This goes some way to support my interviewees' claims about meritocracy (at least of a certain sort) in campaign work, and contrasts with findings about advancement in most occupations, where greater education is almost always a benefit.

Other factors are also worth noting: working on more races predicts higher incomes; national races appear to pay more, on average, than lower-level ones. We can see which kinds of consultants work on greater numbers of races: generally, general consultants (the reference category) work on fewer races per cycle than people in most other specialties. Working for commercial as well as political clients predicts increasing income, and those who are not principals in their own firms earn less, and work on fewer races, than principals.

[21] This, and all following reports of predicted values and changes, were calculated using the prchange and prvalue functions in Long and Xu's spost.ado package in Stata 10.

Now that I have described the factors that predict or correlate with greater success in political consulting, I will consider the distribution of various kinds of opinions about campaigning.

Opinions about Politics

Finally, I turn to the third question for this chapter: how consultants' views on campaign strategies and voters are structured by their position in the field. We can look at this both with the multiple correspondence analyses presented in the first "Findings" section, and using regression.

[Figure 3: Opinions about Campaign Tactics, Voters, Candidates, and Parties]

I projected opinions on four sets of questions about voters, candidates, and campaigning into the MCA representing the field of political consultants; as a reminder, the vertical axis indicates greater or lesser dominance or success in the field, and the horizontal axis represents the opposition between more commercially-oriented consultants (on the left) and more pure-politics ones (on the right). The "average" point of people holding each opinion is shown Figure 3. Answers to the question "How much trust and confidence do you have in the wisdom of the American people when it comes to making a choice on election day?" are indicated with "trustelectorate" and up-pointed triangles. The two questions about what causes voter cynicism, money in campaigns ("moneyvotercynicism") and negative campaigning (with its trajectory traced), are indicated with circles. There are four questions about the acceptability of various campaign practices, all indicated with down-pointed triangles: using truthful information misleadingly out of context ("outofcontext"), using push polls—persuasion-oriented phone-calls disguised as polls—with its trajectory traced, using negative ads focused on an opponent's personal characteristics ("neg. personal"), and using negative ads deliberately to decrease turnout ("neg. dec. turnout"). Finally, there is a question about the quality of the party organizations (with its trajectory traced), and one about candidate quality ("candidate"), both indicated by plus signs.

Some clear patterns emerge: those in the dominant part of the field generally are the most comfortable with the status quo of campaigns. They are the most likely to find acceptable three of the four types of campaign tactics considered ethically problematic by political scientists: both kinds of negative ads and the use of out-of-context "facts." The pattern is reversed, however, for push polls, where the main difference lies along Axis 2: those on the commercial side of the field, including importantly pollsters, are the most opposed to the practice, likely because it damages their reputation. Not only do the most successful consultants find most ethically debatable campaign tactics acceptable, they also do not think these tactics are responsible for voters' cynicism: the degree of blame accorded to both negative campaigning and the role of money in politics increases monotonically with lower positions in the field, and this pattern holds for the other potential causes of voter cynicism asked about in the survey as well, though they are not shown here.

Those in the dominant part of the field also have the highest level of trust in the electorate, but the lowest opinions of both party organizations and candidates for House and Senate seats. Those at the "top" clearly have the least critical approach to their work, but are most critical of other political actors.

The new entrants and dominated members (challengers) of the profession, those with the least income, and the smallest number of candidates, on the other hand, express the most

criticism of the status quo of campaigning, the least faith in the electorate, but the least concern also about the quality of candidates or parties.

Regression analysis confirms these patterns. I created an index of comfort with negative campaigning, by combining answers to the three questions about negative campaigns shown in Figure 3: whether negative campaigns increase voter cynicism, and whether two different kinds of negative tactics are acceptable. Negative campaigning answer choices ranged from 1—4, the other two from 1—3; I simply added all three variables together after recoding as necessary so that higher scores indicated more positive opinions about negative campaigning. I used this index as a dependent variable in a simple OLS regression model; the results are show in Table 5.

[Table 5 about here]

These results confirm much of what is shown in Figure 3, and add a few additional interesting tidbits. First, those who earn more and started in politics earlier—the top consultants—are more comfortable with negative campaigning than their otherwise-similar peers; similarly, senior associates—those who are not principals in their own firms—are less accepting. This is the one model where education and party seem to differentiate consultants: Republicans on average were more likely to say they accept negative tactics and do not believe negative campaigns cause voter cynicism; those with Master's degrees and J.D.s also evinced greater support for negativity in politics.

Discussion & Conclusion

This analysis reveals a clear correspondence between consultants' positions in their field and their views on politics and campaigns. This is the first analysis of the structure of a key part of the field of power in the United States. I have shown that there are clear oppositions structuring the field of political consultants: between the dominant and the dominated or aspiring consultants, and between the purer-politics and commercially-oriented poles. Supplemental variables projected into the space constructed by the MCA reveal that dominant political consultants tend to have started in politics very young, and that internal capitals probably matter the most for advancement.

The results show that this is a field which primarily rewards political insiders: those who started working on campaigns right out of college, especially in a staff capacity, those who have spent some time working for an elected official, and those who have joined the industry's professional association, have the greatest likelihood of success in political consulting. The results are consistent with expectations based on understanding consultants as part of the expanded party network; the consultants who are most likely to earn the most and work on the most races are those with the most political experience.

In addition to adding to our understanding of the forces shaping electoral politics, this work also presents results that are relevant to questions surrounding processes of stratification within occupations and the characteristics of elite occupations (Cech et al. 2011; Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer 2009; e.g. Heinz and Laumann 1982; Kornrich 2009; Phillips 2001; Reskin and McBrier 2000). There is one surprising finding for this body of work, and two confirmations. The surprising finding is the lack of effect of education on income, and the apparent negative effect of graduate work on the number of state races. These findings are surprising because one of the most consistent findings in sociology is the relationship between education and income. The human-capital model (Becker 1962; Groot and Oosterbeek 1994) makes clear that those with more education should on average reap

greater rewards; studies that have examined the returns to education within occupations (Rumberger 1987; Stolzenberg 1978) find the same result.

The confirmatory findings are the importance of social capital and the role of gender in occupational outcomes. Social capital—connections to well-connected others, as indicated by membership in AAPC—is a key resource for acquiring jobs (and in this case clients as well as income) (Burt 1997; Coleman 1988; Mouw 2003; S. S. Smith 2005). There is also clear evidence of a gender wage gap among consultants that is not the result in differences in insider status, experience, or type of work: men have a 10 percent greater predicted likelihood of being in the top income category than otherwise-similar women. This indicates that the forces that work to reduce women's earnings in other fields apply in the world of political consulting as well: both informal recruitment (Reskin and McBrier 2000), and small proportions of women (Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer 2009; Cohen and Huffman 2007) tend to make for bigger income disadvantages for women. There are also some factors specific to the political world: both male and female consultants believe women are at disadvantage in political consulting (Brewer 2003), and political campaigns tend to have an overtly masculine atmosphere (Dittmar n.d.; Mahler 2006). This gender gap has significant implications for studies of women's political participation: Although this survey was taken 7 years after women doubled their representation in the House of Representatives in the 1992 "Year of the Woman," it appears women political consultants were still at a sharp disadvantage compared to their male colleagues. At least through 1999 the increasing visibility of women in the higher echelons of office-seeking has not been accompanied by greater female influence behind the scenes; political consulting is not only disproportionately male, but its rewards are also distributed more to men than to women.

For those concerned about the integrity of the political campaign field or the takeover of politics by money-motivated outsiders (e.g. Rosenbloom 1973; Sabato 1981; Mancini 1999) there is good news: insiders appear to do better than interlopers (or at least better than those who start later, first enter politics as consultants, and have media experience). The most successful political consultants are likely to be those who have dedicated their whole careers to politics, and have thus developed their repertoire of campaign strategies and social networks amidst other career politicos.

On the other hand, those who are primarily interested in the openness of the political system may have reason for concern. The "insiders" who are most likely to succeed in this career are those who were in a position to get a paid job as campaign staff by college or shortly thereafter, which points to the probability that the most successes accrue to those from relatively privileged backgrounds. Because working on a campaign is intrinsically a high-risk career move, the characteristics of entry-level political work make it an unlikely choice for someone without both a deep passion for politics and some pre-existing connections to political actors. Campaigns are necessarily time-limited, and while a winning campaign may lead to jobs with the newly-elected official or in further campaigns, working on a losing campaign has fewer potential rewards. Furthermore, working as an entry-level staffer on a political campaign normally pays only subsistence wages for round-the-clock work (Watson and Campbell 2003). We know from multiple studies of political interest that young people who are deeply interested in electoral politics are also disproportionately male, white, and from well-off, well-educated families (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). It is thus quite likely that starting early and starting out working on campaigns are greatly facilitated by coming from a better-off family, although this question requires further empirical validation.

Finally, this analysis reveals a clear opposition between those at the top of the field and those at the bottom in their views about politics: the most established are the most positive about a variety of practices regularly deployed in campaigns, while the dominated/new entrants are much more critical. This means that established political consultants are generally comfortable with a number of tactics political scientists and the general public consider problematic; while previous studies have been relatively sanguine about consultants' views on campaigning (e.g. Dulio and Nelson 2005) as they are on average not that different from those of other political actors, these findings imply that the less-successful consultants, many of whom are challengers who will be moving into the dominant parts of the field as their careers advance, may change their views on the ethics of campaigning as they become more established in the field.

The results reveal important patterns in consultants' electoral influence. Although some time has passed since this survey was administered, recent analyses of other aspects of the field of political consulting indicate that the profession continues to grow, but offer no evidence of substantial changes in its organization or reward structure (Grossmann 2009a, 2009b; Montgomery and Nyhan 2010). The most successful people working on writing political speeches, crafting voter-contact strategies, or designing campaign ads are those who probably have never done much else; their views of politics and campaigns have been shaped almost entirely within the world of intense partisan competition across two-year election cycles. As Americans have celebrated the rise of non-traditional candidates and office-holders, including our current President, the narratives shaping their perceptions of those candidates have almost certainly been produced by the most traditional of power-holders, the most successful of whom are also the most likely to embrace tactics disliked by most Americans.

FIGURE 1: ACTIVE CATEGORIES AND ACTIVE INDIVIDUALS

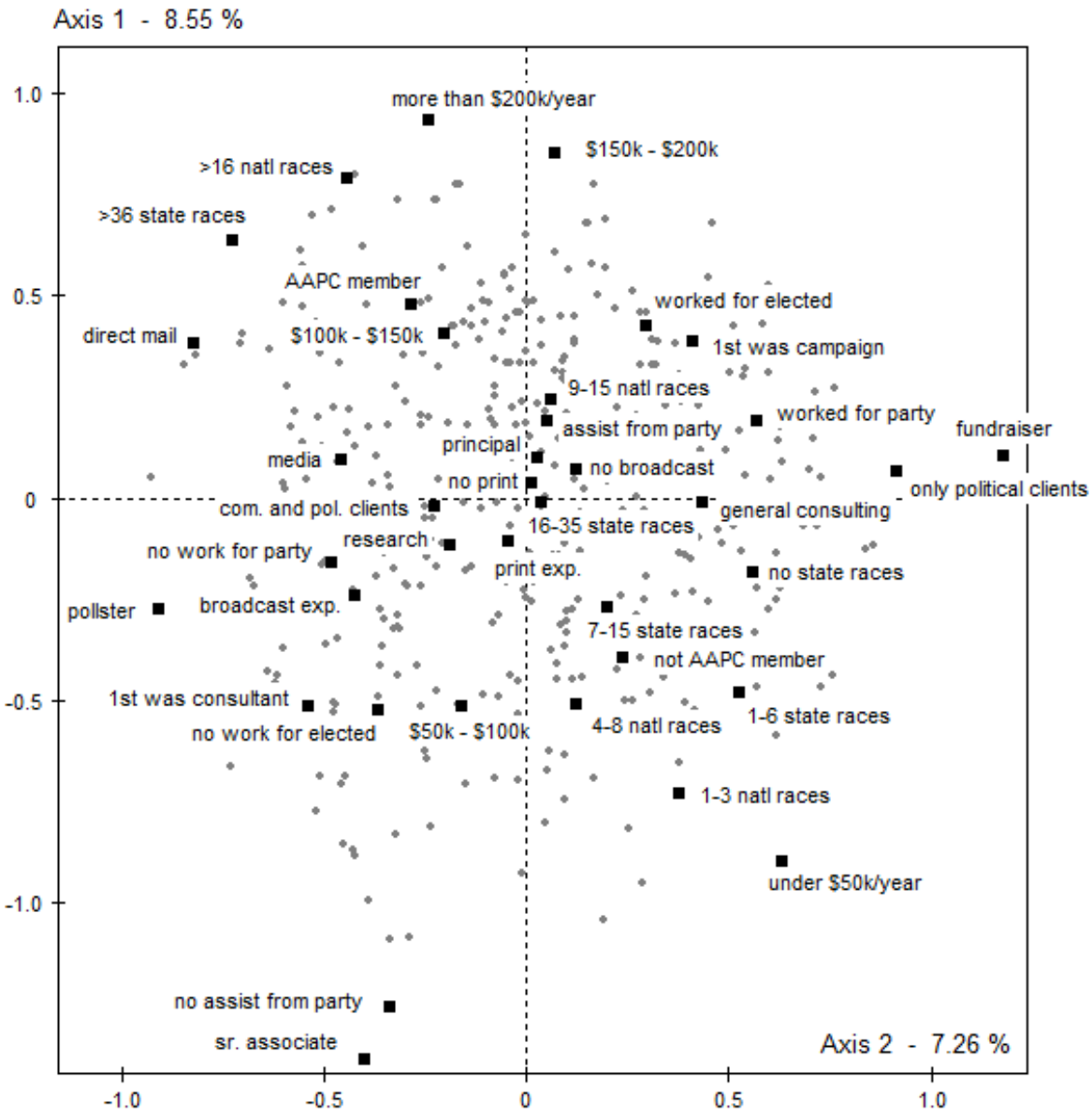

FIGURE 2: STRUCTURING FACTORS

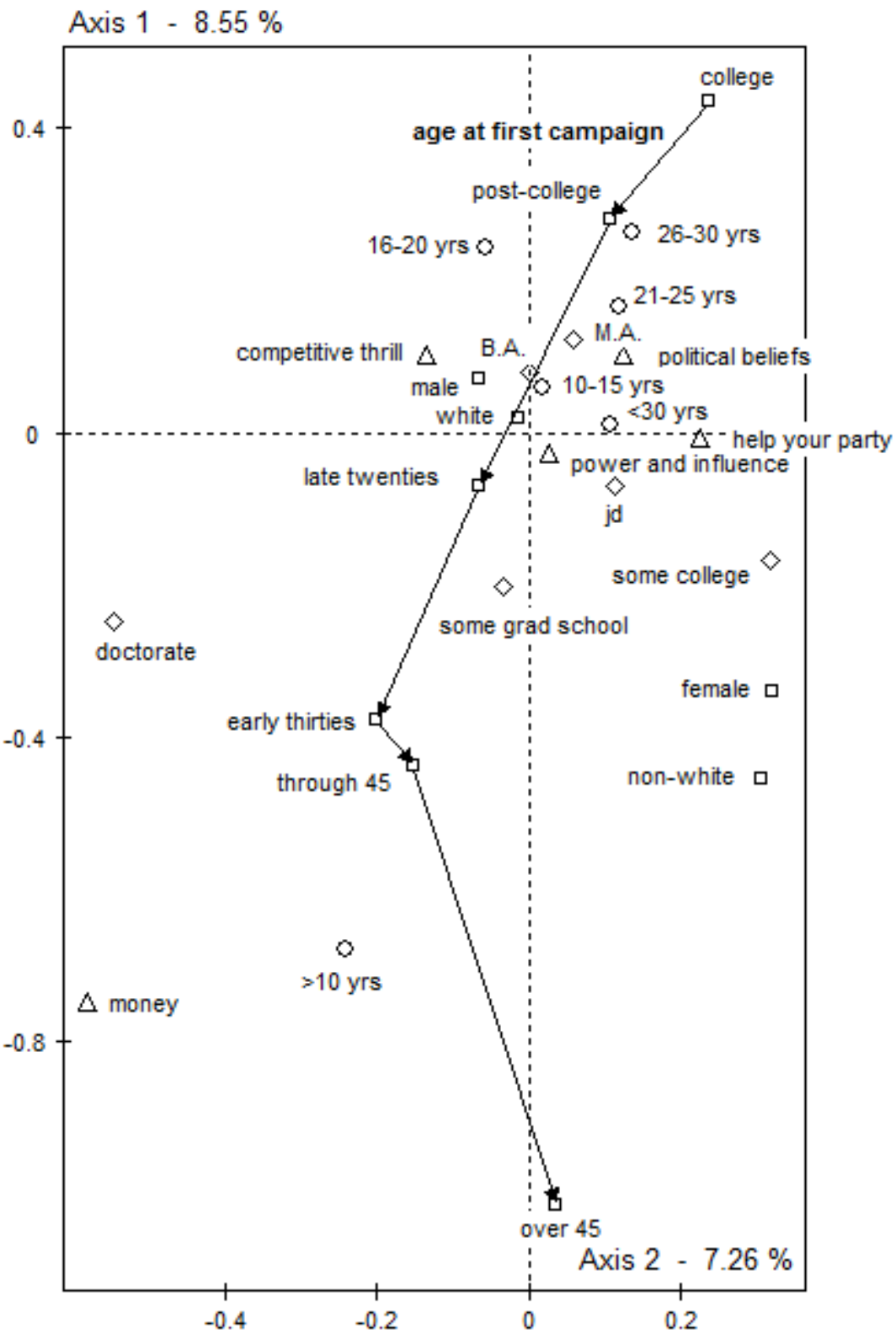

FIGURE 3: OPINIONS ABOUT VOTERS, CANDIDATES AND CAMPAIGN TACTICS

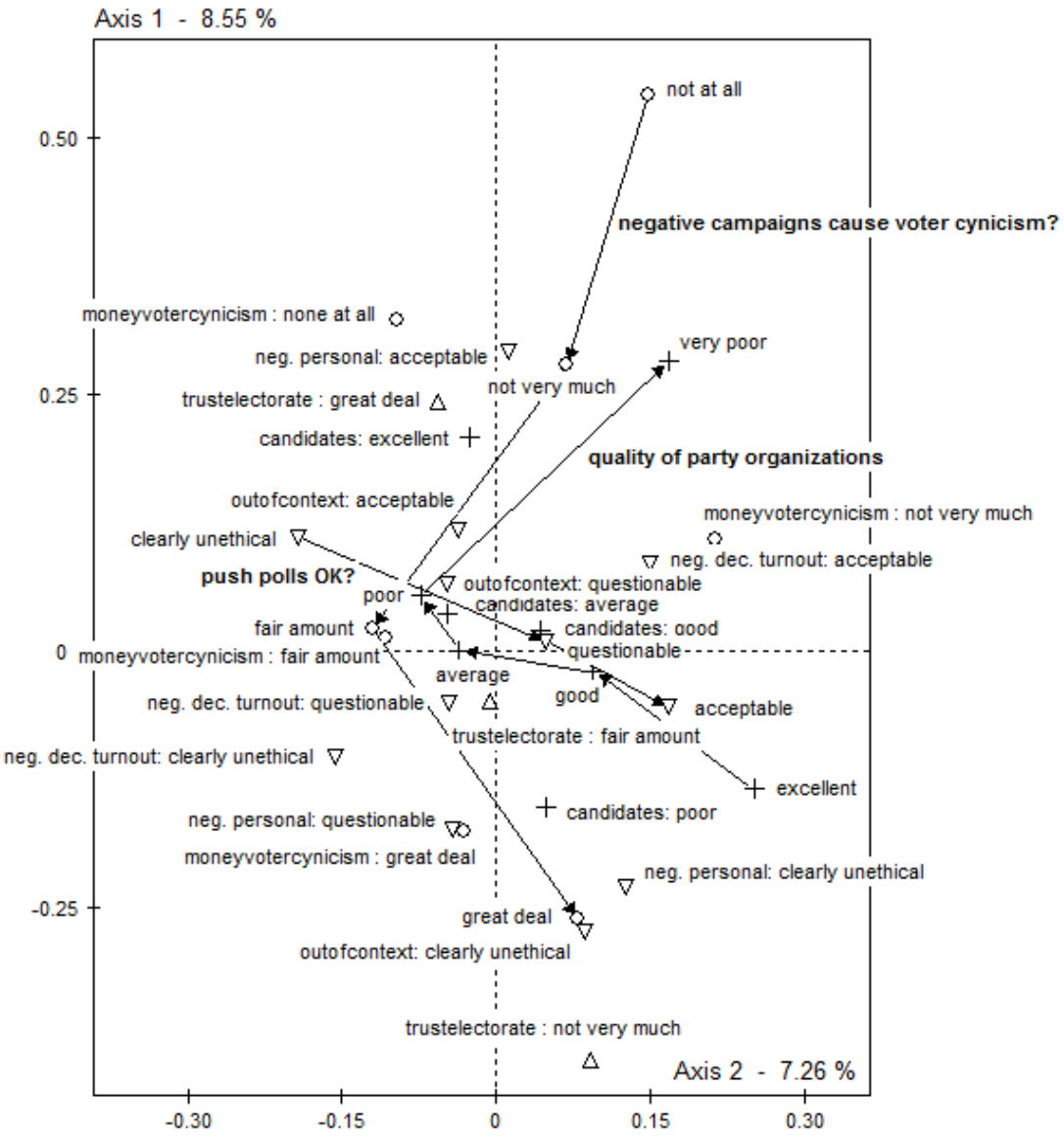

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	N	mean	sd	min	max
Success					
Total Number of National Races in Last Three Cycles	362	16.05	21.69	1	160
Income from Consulting [a]	402	116294	71840	25000	225000
Total Number of National Races 1998	397	5.84	9.63	0	80
Total Number of State and Local Races in 1998	396	10.35	14.13	0	80
Career					
Age at First Campaign	400	27.03	7.62	8	63
Started at 25 or Younger	400	50.8%	0.50	binary	
First Job Was as Campaign Staff	402	58.2%	0.49	binary	
Ever Worked for an Elected Official	402	57.0%	0.50	binary	
Ever Worked for a Political Party	400	48.8%	0.50	binary	
Ever Worked for Print or Broadcast News	401	35.7%	0.48	binary	
Years in Politics	401	18.50	8.85	1	51
Education & Ascriptive Characteristics					
Less than BA	402	10.0%	0.30	binary	
BA degree	402	51.7%	0.50	binary	
Master's Degree	402	22.6%	0.42	binary	
Law Degree	402	6.5%	0.25	binary	
PhD	402	9.2%	0.29	binary	
White	400	95.0%	0.22	binary	
Male	402	81.8%	0.39	binary	
Current Work					
AAPC Member	397	45.3%	0.50	binary	
Commercial and Political Clients	400	78.8%	0.41	binary	
Senior Associate (not Principal)	402	5.7%	0.23	binary	
Specialty: Pollster	402	14.7%	0.35	binary	
Specialty: Media	402	17.4%	0.38	binary	
Specialty: Direct Mail	402	8.2%	0.27	binary	
Specialty: Fundraising	402	7.2%	0.26	binary	
Specialty: Other (Field, Research, or Phones)	401	4.5%	0.21	binary	
Firm Works with Both Parties	396	25.0%	0.43	binary	
Firm Works only with Republicans	396	32.1%	0.47	binary	
Firm Works only with Democrats	396	42.9%	0.50	binary	

[a] Income converted from categories to dollars for summary purposes; each category was converted to its midpoint; the lowest category to $25,000 and the highest to $225,000.

TABLE 2: QUESTIONS, CATEGORIES, CONTRIBUTIONS AND COORDINATES

Topic				AXIS 1		AXIS 2	
Variable	Modality	N	%	Ctr.	y1	Ctr.	y2
Type Of Work							
specialty							
	direct mail	29	7.3	0.5	0.38	**2.8**	-0.82
	fundraiser	26	6.5	0	0.11	**5.1**	1.18
	general	187	46.8	0	-0.01	**5**	0.43
	media	72	18.0	0.1	0.1	2.1	-0.46
	pollster	63	15.8	0.6	-0.28	**7.3**	-0.91
	research (passive)	10	2.5				
	phones (passive)	2	0.5				
	other (passive)	4	1.0				
	field (passive)	7	1.8				
	total contribution of the question			1.2		***22.4***	
clients							
	commercial and political	318	79.1	0	-0.02	2.3	-0.23
	only political	82	20.4	0	0.07	**9.7**	0.92
	missing data (passive)	2	0.5				
	total contribution of the question			0.1		***12.1***	
Career History							
Worked for Elected Official							
	no	180	44.78	**6**	-0.53	**3.4**	-0.37
	yes	222	55.22	**4.8**	0.43	**2.8**	0.3
	total contribution of the question			***10.8***		6.2	
Worked for Party							
	no	217	53.98	0.7	-0.16	**7.1**	-0.48
	yes	184	45.77	0.8	0.19	**8.5**	0.57
	missing data (passive)	1	0.25				
	total contribution of the question			1.5		***15.6***	
Worked for Print News							
	no	305	75.87	0	0.03	0	0.01
	yes	97	24.13	0.1	-0.11	0	-0.04
	total contribution of the question			0.2		0	
Worked for Broadcast News							
	no	310	77.11	0.2	0.07	0.7	0.13
	yes	92	22.89	0.6	-0.24	2.3	-0.42
	total contribution of the question			0.8		3	
First Role in Politics							
	campaign staff	223	55.47	**4**	0.39	**5.3**	0.41
	consultant	170	42.29	**5.4**	-0.52	**6.9**	-0.54
	missing data (passive)	9	2.24				
	total contribution of the question			***9.5***		***12.3***	

TABLE 2 CONTINUED.

Topic				AXIS 1		AXIS 2	
Variable	Modality	N	%	Ctr.	y1	Ctr.	y2
Current Position							
Level in Firm							
	principal	376	93.5	0.4	0.1	0	0.03
	sr. associate	23	5.7	**5.4**	-1.39	0.5	-0.4
	jr. associate (passive)	3	0.8				
	total contribution of the question			5.8		0.6	
Assist from Party							
	no	53	13.2	**10.1**	-1.26	0.9	-0.34
	yes	349	86.8	1.5	0.19	0.1	0.05
	total contribution of the question			***11.6***		1	
AAPC Member							
	no	216	53.7	**4.1**	-0.4	1.7	0.24
	yes	179	44.5	**4.9**	0.48	2	-0.28
	missing data (passive)	7	1.7				
	total contribution of the question			***8.9***		3.8	
Income from Consulting							
	under $50	87	21.64	**8.5**	-0.9	**4.9**	0.63
	$50-$100k	86	21.39	2.7	-0.52	0.3	-0.16
	$100-$150k	78	19.4	1.5	0.41	0.4	-0.2
	$150-$200k	41	10.2	**3.6**	0.85	0	0.07
	$200k+	73	18.16	**7.6**	0.93	0.6	-0.24
	missing data (passive)	37	9.2				
	total contribution of the question			***24***		6.3	
Number of National Races							
	1 to 3 races	83	20.65	**5.4**	-0.73	1.7	0.38
	4 to 8 races	106	26.37	**3.3**	-0.51	0.2	0.12
	9 to 15 races	98	24.38	0.7	0.24	0.1	0.06
	>16	115	28.61	**8.7**	0.79	**3.2**	-0.44
	total contribution of the question			***18***		5.2	
Number of Lower-Level Races							
	0 local races	22	5.47	0.1	-0.18	1	0.56
	1 to 6 races	71	17.66	2	-0.48	**2.8**	0.53
	7 to 15 races	98	24.38	0.9	-0.27	0.6	0.2
	16-35	105	26.12	0	-0.01	0	0.04
	>36	99	24.63	**4.8**	0.63	**7.3**	-0.72
	missing data (passive)	7	1.74				
	total contribution of the question			***7.7***		***11.7***	

Note: Contributions for those modalities maintained for interpretation of each axis are in bold; total question-contributions maintained for interpretation are in bold italics. Modalities not used in the analysis are noted with (passive).

TABLE 3: VARIANCES OF AXES, MODIFIED RATES AND CUMULATED MODIFIED RATES

	Axis 1	Axis 2
Variance of Axes (eigenvalue)	0.159	0.135
Modified Rates	49.5%	24.7%
Cumulated Modified Rate	49.5%	74.2%

TABLE 4: MODELS OF CONSULTING INCOME, NUMBER OF STATE AND LOCAL RACES, AND NUMBER OF NATIONAL RACES

	Negative Binomial Regression of Total National Races over 3 Cycles	Ordered Logistic Regression of Income
Success		
Total Number of National Races 1998		0.073***
Total Number of State and Local Races in 1998		0.016
Career		
Started at 25 or Younger	0.372***	-0.322
First Job Was as Campaign Staff	-0.038	0.541*
Ever Worked for an Elected Official	0.043	0.607**
Ever Worked for a Political Party	-0.083	0.144
Ever Worked for Print or Broadcast News	-0.302**	-0.319
Years in Politics	-0.006	0.063***
Education & Ascriptive Characteristics		
BA degree	0.25	0.173
Master's Degree	0.295	0.65
Law Degree	0.095	0.338
PhD	0.341	0.489
White	0.529*	0.562
Male	0.413**	0.574*
Current Work		
AAPC Member	0.369***	0.951***
Commercial and Political Clients	0.079	0.767**
Senior Associate (not Principal)	-0.599**	-0.983*
Specialty: Pollster	0.607***	0.287
Specialty: Media	0.342*	-0.05
Specialty: Direct Mail	0.226	-0.044
Specialty: Fundraising	1.058***	0.24
Specialty: Other (Field, Research, or Phones)	0.577*	-0.596
Firm Works with Both Parties	-0.191	-0.288
Firm Works only with Republicans	-0.032	-0.067
Constant	1.222***	
lnalpha	-0.249***	
Income under $50,000 threshold		2.800***
Income $50,000-$100,000 threshold		4.267***
Income $100,000-$150,000 threshold		5.415***
N	377	375
chi2	97.066	146.351

**Note: ***** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, two-tailed tests. Specialty reference category is general consultants; party reference category is Democrats; education reference category No College Degree.

TABLES 5A—5D: MOTIVATIONS, OPINIONS ON VOTERS AND POLITICS

Table 5a: Motivations	Motivation for Becoming a Political Consultant		Motivation for Remaining a Political Consultant	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
political beliefs / ideology	219	55.44	167	41.96
thrill of competition	76	19.24	66	16.58
help your party be in the majority	28	7.09	28	7.04
money you could earn	40	10.13	102	25.63
power and influence	15	3.8	16	4.02
other	17	4.3	19	4.77
Total	*395*	*100*	*398*	*100*

Table 5b: Quality of Other Political Actors	Candidate Quality		Party Organization Quality	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
very poor	3	0.77	18	4.63
poor	49	12.6	82	21.08
average	178	45.76	176	45.24
good	143	36.76	97	24.94
excellent	16	4.11	16	4.11
Total	*389*	*100*	*389*	*100*

Table 5c: Trust in the Electorate	Freq.	Percent
great deal	149	37.16
fair amount	175	43.64
not very much	65	16.21
none at all	12	2.99
Total	*401*	*100*

Table 5d: Causes of Voter Cynicism	Negative Campaigns		Money in Politics	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
great deal	142	35.41	136	33.92
fair amount	159	39.65	121	30.17
not very much	79	19.7	102	25.44
none at all	21	5.24	42	10.47
Total	*401*	*100*	*401*	*100*

TABLE 5E: OPINIONS ON ETHICAL CAMPAIGNING

Table 5e: Ethical Campaigning	Negative Personal Attacks		Negative Ads to Decrease Turnout	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
acceptable	156	39.39	148	37.28
questionable	174	43.94	135	34.01
clearly unethical	66	16.67	114	28.72
Total	*396*	*100*	*397*	*100*
	Push Polls		Out of Context Claims	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
acceptable	92	24.08	52	13
questionable	144	37.7	242	60.5
clearly unethical	146	100	106	26.5
Total	*382*	*100*	*400*	*100*

TABLE 6: PREDICTORS OF SUPPORT FOR NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING

	OLS Regression of Negative Campaigning Index
Success	
Income in last year from consulting	0.164*
Total Number of National Races 1998	-0.009
Total Number of State and Local Races in 1998	0.001
Career	
Started at 25 or Younger	0.489*
First Job Was as Campaign Staff	-0.014
Ever Worked for an Elected Official	0.336
Ever Worked for a Political Party	0.187
Ever Worked for Print or Broadcast News	0.181
Years in Politics	-0.033**
Education & Ascriptive Characteristics	
BA degree	0.465
Master's Degree	0.705*
Law Degree	1.025*
PhD	0.74
White	0.233
Male	0.252
Current Work	
AAPC Member	-0.035
Commercial and Political Clients	-0.041
Senior Associate (not Principal)	-0.779*
Specialty: Pollster	-0.128
Specialty: Media	0.004
Specialty: Direct Mail	0.311
Specialty: Fundraising	-0.126
Specialty: Other (Field, Research, or Phones)	-0.133
Firm Works with Both Parties	-0.191
Firm Works only with Republicans	0.462*
Constant	2.900***
N	365
chi2	0.167

Note: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p< .05, two-tailed tests. Specialty reference category is general consultants; party reference category is Democrats; education reference category is No College Degree.

Chapter 6: Inside the Minds of "Politicos"

Introduction

In this chapter, I use approaches from studies of other kinds of cultural production to understand why campaigns do what they do I draw on my in-depth interviews with 57 campaign operatives, including staff and advisers as well as consultants. I find that campaign decision-makers create political content not, primarily, by calculating its effect on vote-share or on their income, but by drawing on acquired, practical knowledge, a "political practical sense" about what makes for good campaign material. They, like political scientists, are deeply uncertain about whether, when, and how much any particular campaign strategy will matter. This is an odd situation: on the one hand, elections almost always end with an unambiguous result—a win for one side and a loss for the other—which journalists and pundits inevitably ascribe to the acuity or lapses, respectively, of the opposing campaigns. On the other hand, a nearly infinite array of forces can affect citizens' ultimate decisions about whether, and for whom, to vote; and many of these, from the weather and the economy through candidates' flubs and waiters' stealth recordings, are entirely outside the power of campaign operatives.

There are many possible solutions to this problem of matching uncertain means to usually over-determined ends, but within the field of electoral production the primary strategy is relying on its internal conventional wisdom or institutional knowledge. Specialists in political production generally believe that good campaign strategy is a combination of natural political instinct and learning-on-the-job, eschewing scholarly work on campaigns and generally placing little faith even in schools dedicated to the art and science of campaign management. Because of the short-lived nature of campaign organizations and the lack of objective criteria for evaluating particular tactics or messages, political operatives get work primarily through their relationships and reputations with one another and with candidates; thus the most important audience for any given campaign output may be other "politicos" rather than voters. Unconventional strategies are generally frowned upon, and those who deploy unconventional approaches risk being seen by their peers as having poor instincts or just not "getting it." While a win to which unorthodox means may have contributed *might* help a campaign professional's career prospects, a loss using the same tactics would be quite likely to damage her reputation. These factors combine to encourage what many of my respondents called "cookie-cutter" campaigning: the stifling of innovative approaches in favor of the reproduction of the kinds of tactics that drive both voters and scholars to despair about the democratic process.

Scholars and journalists both tend to approach campaigns as fairly straightforward attempts to persuade voters. But campaigns are highly produced sets of cultural objects, including ads on TV, radio, and online; speeches; mailers; and public events. However much they aim to influence voters, campaign tactics are not, and cannot be, entirely determined by considerations of their potential effects on the campaign, for a variety of reasons: because it is not possible to know for certain how any given voter or set of voters will react to particular messages; because there is always some creative element in producing any event or object; and because campaign outputs need to communicate with multiple audiences, including the media, funders, and other political operatives inside and outside the campaign. The process of creating political content, however much data goes into it, is thus fundamentally a creative, uncertain one. A number of people I interviewed, in fact, made explicit comparisons between their field and Hollywood or other kinds of cultural

production. For example, here's "M.A.K.,"[22] a Republican Communications Consultant in his late 40s, with about 20 years in politics. He had been the national communications director for a major Presidential campaign. He said:

> [...] campaigning and reaching audiences is a craft, much the way that people who produce TV shows are always looking for the new kind of "Lost." People who produce movies are always looking for the new kind of "Shrek." [...] people who produce technology are looking for the new iPod, or the new iPad. You need to be looking for a new way to hone your craft and get better, and advance sort of new things.

While M.A.K may have been thinking about the mass-market appeal of each of those items, the analogy is telling because we know that the production of each of those hot "new things" is always as much a story about the judgments and organizations of people in Hollywood, or Silicon Valley, or New York, as about the tastes of the mass of consumers (Gitlin 2000; Peterson and Anand 2004). Just like films, even mass-market ones, respond to trends and ideas within Hollywood about what makes for "good" or "big" films (Baker and Faulkner 1991), the creative content of campaigns—from ads to mailers to new micro-targeting strategies—is about what is happening *inside* the field as much as or more than what, objectively, moves voters. In other words, political production is not just instrumental and rational, it is the outcome of a particular set of knowledges and expected practices and dynamics of competition in a field.

My interviewees consistently revealed that:

A. They are, as a whole, uncertain and ambivalent about whether and how what they do affects voters and electoral outcomes. Many, in fact, told me directly that campaigns rarely matter.
B. This uncertainty, combined with the nature of campaign work, makes it nearly impossible to objectively assess one another's competence as campaign decision-makers.
C. The most important resource for attaining work in campaigns, especially at the decision-making level, is connections to other campaign operatives; so they are constantly called upon to assess one another's competence. Given (A) and (B) above, they must do this through some other means than verifiable skill at influencing voters or otherwise affecting election outcomes.
D. They thus make judgments about other "politicos" primarily based on a political "gut sense" or "intuition," which is largely a practical, tacit knowledge of what has been done before and received well by other politicos.
E. This and other features of the field of electoral production lead to "cookie-cutter" campaigning, stifling innovation and encouraging the use of campaign tactics that no one outside politics likes.

The remainder of this chapter discusses and provides evidence for each of the five parts of the argument described above.

(A) Uncertainty and Ambivalence about Campaign Effects

[22] Initials are not actual initials.

Although I never directly asked about how or whether campaigns or campaign tactics matter, almost all of my interviewees demonstrated at least some ambivalence or uncertainty about the impact of their work: of those who discussed the connection between campaign strategy and outcomes at all, only seven seemed unambiguously confident that their efforts in a campaign could determine the outcome of an election. The majority of my interviewees ranged from more tentative expressions of the connection between campaigns and election outcomes to clear ambivalence, while five politicos attributed essentially all election results to factors outside campaigns' control. These differences in views were not strongly patterned by party, age, or the level of the campaign hierarchy at which the interviewee worked. Broadly, the modal position was something like "campaign decisions can sometimes affect outcomes when all other factors are equal," but of course, all other factors are rarely equal.

Individuals' views often shifted as they talked about different aspects of campaign work. For example, one person I talked with was an up-and-coming political consultant, "H.A.T," who was working for one of the larger Republican polling firms, recognized as a "rising star" by the industry magazine (*Campaigns & Elections Magazine*), and was very pleased that he was starting to have appearances as a TV pundit. He had just told me that professional consultant-staffed campaigns almost always beat campaigns without them (which is true: Johnson 2001), so I asked what determines who wins when both campaigns have professionals. He said something many others echoed in various ways:

> You know, I would like to tell you that it's the consultants can make the race. But when you're facing off against a team of equally experienced consultants, there's more strategy, it's more complex, you play a better game overall, but at the end of the day it really comes down to which candidate naturally resonates—something that you can't fake. And turnout you can affect to some degree, but, you know, at the end of the day, if turnout's really low and you lose because the other candidate was a little bit better known going into it, then, you know, that's something that you couldn't control. So it's a little difficult. But consultants are always wanting to take credit for it.

But he simultaneously wanted to assert that his skills and expertise did indeed matter. A few minutes later, he continued:

> Yeah. At the end of the day, if we win, it will definitely be because we had the superior strategy and we were able to fully take advantage of the environment. But, you know, at the end of the day, too, it's—I think campaign consultants have a tendency of taking advantage of things that were completely outside of our control. Turnout is outside of our control. You know, the way that the race closes and the definition of momentum is, you know, out of our control. And sometimes candidates that lose, who were supposed to win, because they said or did something stupid, like, the

> 'macaca moment'[23] in Virginia, for example, that's outside of our control. And I'm sure that the consultants on the other side took advantage of it, but really all they did was perpetuate a moment that they were able to capture on film.

Most interviewees at some point said that factors outside their control generally mattered as much as or more than what they could do. These factors were most often the candidate and his or her ability to "resonate," the "environment" (whether it was supposed to be a good election for their party overall), and, simply, luck. This is a Republican who was an advisor to both the 2000 and 2008 McCain campaigns as well as the 2004 Bush campaign, H.E.B.: "No, the candidate's much more important than we [campaign operatives, advisers, and consultants] are. The candidate, the issues, the environment." I started to ask "Does it matter though—" and he interrupted, saying "I'm belittling my own profession, but I mean—[my mentor] always says, and I think he's right, that there's like a five to eight percent margin, you know, that we're dealing with."

S.T.M., a senior democratic strategist and consultant, during the course of an enjoyable rambling interview that lasted close to two hours, made both the campaigns-matter and the campaigns-don't-matter arguments quite vehemently. Early in the conversation, in response to one of my questions about what makes someone a good consultant, he said "winning races have lots of things, but they often have a consultant—at least one consultant that falls in love with that race or falls in love with that candidate." He went on to tell the story of how a particular media consultant, who had "never been able to reach sort of the top tier," had nonetheless nearly been the cause of an unexpected win:

> this race did not deserve (quote unquote) deserve our attention. It didn't have much money, [the candidate] was a bit of a whack job, the polling wasn't great, but he kept [...] a top national pollster focused on the race. He kept me focused on the race, doing stuff, you know, for them for really cheap, to keep them up and raising money and doing voter contact. And [the candidate] almost won. And if [this consultant] had been able to convince the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee to get in there earlier, he would have won.

This story was presented as an example of how sometimes consultants don't "bring their A game" to all the races on which they work; but it is clearly a story in which S. T. M. believed that the concerted efforts of top consultants bringing their "A games" (with just a little more funding), would have determined an election outcome. On the other hand, later in the conversation, S. T. M. related some good advice he received from a mentor. The mentor told him:

> "You know, [S.T.M.], [Presidential primary candidate]'s a great guy, he's going to do really well in Iowa, he's never going to get any traction in New Hampshire, you're going to get fired if you do that job. He will fire the first three people

[23] During the 2006 Virginia Senate race, George Allen was caught on camera calling an Indian-American "macaca." This operative was filming Allen's public appearances for the opposing Jim Webb campaign; the clip was widely replayed and Allen was cast as a racist; the "macaca moment" was widely credited with Allen's narrow loss to Webb.

> that do that job." And I was, like, You know—and I was pretty burnt out from the congressional race, so I was, like, I don't want to go up to New Hampshire in the cold to get fired.[...] And he fired the first three people and the campaign manager at the time that wanted to hire me. So that was good advice.

In this story, this candidate was going to lose no matter what, and whatever staff happened to be working in New Hampshire were going to be blamed and fired, no matter how well they worked for the candidate. B.E.M., a Republican just starting his own consulting firm, told me "you can be, you know, really smart and lose every race." These stories, along with H.A.T.'s comments, are not incompatible with a coherent underlying perspective on how and when campaigns matter, probably something along the lines of "in close races our work can make the difference, but some disadvantages are too big to be overcome." Few politicos I spoke with would be likely, based on their conversations with me, to disagree with that statement. There were five, however, whose only comments about winning and losing campaigns focused solely on factors outside their control. L.U.K, a Republican web designer., when I asked whether he considered a candidate's chances for winning when looking at races to work on, said "Well, a lot of it is luck. I feel like ninety percent is luck." He then quickly checked to make sure I would not attribute that quote to him.

I asked one interviewee directly about whether campaigns matter, and since he had said he reads a lot of academic political science in his work, I brought up the literature largely showing the dearth of campaign effects. L.U.A., a Republican associate in a firm that had worked for McCain, said:

> I mean, campaigns don't matter until they matter, which sounds like a Yogi Berra quote, I mean, you know, what if somebody threw a campaign and nobody showed up. Fine, you know, so I would like to see a candidate run and say that, "I know that campaigns don't matter, so I'm not gonna run a campaign."
>
> DL (me): [agreeing that that would not work] Just here I am, it's a Democrat type year, I'm a Democrat, go ahead and vote for me, see ya in November.
>
> L.U.A**:** They would… I'm like, it's an arms race, you know? It's you know mutually assured destruction. You've got to build up your arsenal and they're gonna build it up to match and you're gonna be right where you started. And so, I think, I read all that literature, I totally understand it, and I think that what they offer is important in that ultimately you need to be aware of these things, you need to understand the climate you're working in and know what your strengths are and know what your weaknesses are at a macro level and be able to adjust yourself accordingly. I mean, we did a post-election analysis where we showed you know the nine predictions that political scientists have made based on nothing but macro indicators, and showed how well they

> aligned with the final vote, [...] and we were able to say, "Well, you know, I don't know if McCain really could've done much to win there." But, you know, the fact of the matter is that maybe if people paid attention to that ahead of time they could've somehow inoculated themselves better about the economy and blah, blah, blah [...] but yeah, what if you didn't campaign? You'd lose [laughs]. Cause the other guy would be campaigning against you. Maybe if you both didn't campaign.

L.U.A. vacillates within this one paragraph between explaining why campaigns cannot change the outcomes predicted by "the fundamentals" and acknowledging or hoping that there might have been a way for McCain to win. But he settles on a clear justification for the work of campaigns: they are in an "arms race," and as long as one side is campaigning, the other side has to. If both sides are equally good, as they usually are, then their work essentially cancels each other out, as H.A.T. said, and the race hinges once again on factors outside the campaigns' control.

This sentiment—that much of election results are outside of campaigns' ability to influence—was not limited to people who lost their most recent race. Someone who worked running state field operations in Obama's 2008 campaign made the complementary point to L.U.A.'s. T.S.K. told me:

> [...] if you're running a congressional race and Wall Street was tanking, like, that's completely out of your control, but that just may ultimately be what makes the difference. [...] I mean, we [on the Obama campaign] certainly fucked up a lot. That is for sure. But, you know, we had a great candidate, [...] and I think the sort of the stars were aligned and we had a good organization, so we were able to come back from those mistakes. But we definitely were not close to being perfect. I mean, when I read David Plouffe's book, I was, like, Oh, gosh, right, that happened, that was bad and like that happened and that was bad, and we did this and that was bad. Sort of like, how did we win? Just kept on messing up.

Further, even if one believes that good campaigns lead to wins, it is often very difficult to tell which aspect of the campaign strategy actually led to those good outcomes, even for those people working on a race. S.T.A., a Republican "grassroots" (mass-mailing) fundraiser, told me:

> everybody wants to point blame all over the place or take credit. I mean, one of our claims to fame was the [Senate candidate] race back in 2004 and we raised him like $2 million in like the last month. So all of that awesome stuff that media was spending and voter contact—you know, we were the ones that raised that money. But if you talk to the media people—"Well, we put all the ads together"—but who paid for those ads? The money we raised you. You know, so everybody's going to take credit for a success and point fingers on a failure.

Campaign staff, consultants, and advisors, are as a group genuinely (and correctly) unsure about whether, how, and when what they do has the effects they intend. The get one result for each race—a win or a loss—but it is exceedingly rare that they can retroactively, let alone contemporaneously, know who or what, inside or outside the campaign, led to that outcome.

(B) Difficulty of Assessing One Another's Skills

Almost all of my interviews made it clear that, whatever the relationship between campaign strategies and outcomes, assessing an individual's campaign skill was largely subjective. I asked G.E.J. how someone outside the world of campaigns could tell who was good, and he tied together the difficulty of assessing quality with the randomness of many campaign outcomes:

> It's just circumstances. You know, here's a perfect example of someone who has had great success in the career but did not have good success at all is James Carville. Like the famous story, like Carville—always on these losing campaigns, but was he bad then? No. You know, he was always a very capable guy; he just had bad luck and because you're going to lose most of the time in politics unless you're running incumbent stuff—you're gonna lose.

A number of people I talked to wished explicitly for an objective system for evaluating one another's skills—a few even suggested maybe my dissertation could provide them with that system. I asked nearly everyone how they assess other politicos' campaign capabilities, and the most common responses were variations of "it's hard to quantify." For example, this is a very typical statement, from a Democrat (B.O.T.) who works providing data to campaigns across the country:

> The campaign manager—it's not like there's someplace you can go easily and see, well, who's won more of the tough races, right? Because you could maybe find, through, like, *Campaigns and Elections* magazine like a win-loss record or something like that, and you could start to compile that. But then, like I said, you'd have to control for someone might win a ton of races, but they're just doing a lot of safe candidates. Or the opposite, because they tend to take a lot of long-shots. That doesn't mean anything. So, it would be impossible to know. So then people fall for more marketing and more of this personal relationships, who they know.

Here is an almost identical quote, this time from a Republican woman in her early 30s, who had worked as a campaign manager for local and state-wide races in Virginia, and was now working for a direct mail firm (Q.U.M.):

> I've often thought about, like, it would be really great to do something where there's actually a way that Republicans can keep track of and train good campaign managers. And field workers, field operatives. Because there's no good tracking system of these people. I mean, they float around from campaign to campaign and you hear names, and Oh, I knew

> that guy, he was working on this guy's campaign like three cycles back. They really jump like around from all these states, but no one really keeps track of them. And you hear things about these people but you don't know if they're really good—you don't know. [...] So when Congressional years come up and the RNC and NRSC, they need good campaign managers for these targeted races, we have a list of people to choose from and we can send these people off and we know they're gonna do a good job. Like I think that would be great, the Republican Party, if we could do something to start tracking people like that.

Many of the people I interviewed, of course, were confident about their ability to judge the quality of the work done by others in the same firm or campaign; some even reported knowing with certainty whether peers were genuinely skilled or not. Nonetheless, the great majority—even of those who could, themselves, judge quality objectively—were concerned that candidates hiring consultants and campaign managers were not able to accurately discern politicos' skills. One component of this concern was that, when a campaign wins, everyone involved with the campaign is accorded credit. For example, S.T.M. told me: "all you need is one big win. You could have fucked up everything. I mean, we could suck, but if [our Senate candidate this cycle] wins, we're gonna look golden. Even if we had nothin' to do with it." This was a common theme: when a campaign wins, everyone involved claims, and largely gets, credit. K.U.L., who had just worked (in a small role) on a campaign for a Republican who won a statewide race that was expected to go to the Democrat, said:

> And so there are a lot of folks I meet that…I don't know that they really know what the hell that they're doing, but there's no way to verify it. You get a lot of candidates just desperate for some help. *(Interviewer: Right)* The other problem is nobody sits down after the campaign and says, Why did the candidate win? And as a result, there's no survey that says was it that TV ad that won your vote or was it the call that you got from your neighbor? [...] And so nobody ever sits down after it's over and says, [candidate] won because of his website. Or [candidate] won because of the TV ads. *(Right, right)* Or [candidate] won because—and as a result, some of these folks who were just on a winning campaign and just happened to be there are considered, Oh, they must be really good. Just like with [candidate], we raised $12 million for him online. That doesn't mean if you hire me, I'm gonna raise $12 million online for you.

B.E.M, a Republican just starting his own targeting firm, explained it this way:

> I mean, if you were a Democrat working on a campaign in 2006, 2008, you could have been sub-par and still look like a genius. You know, on the Republican side, you could have been a genius and looked like a fool. And this year, I think it's probably flipped where there's probably a lot of sub-par

> Republican operatives that are gonna look great, because you know, the tidal wave is going to carry them across the finish line.

While he emphasized that *he* knew who was "sub-par" or smart, he was very aware that many people formed their perception of politicos' acumen based on recent wins or losses. L.E.J., who worked on Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign, told me: "there's also people who, especially in electoral politics, like you can kind of luck into success. So you can sort of, through no doing of your own, win some campaigns because the things were stacked up favorably to you and then you become a winner and then…you're a winner. [...]So, you know, I think there is quite a bit of that." So not only are politicos uncertain about how and whether campaign strategies affect election outcomes, they are also generally aware of the difficulty of assessing individual political acumen.

(C) Importance of Connections

Every person I interviewed except one, at some point in our discussion, explained how important connections, networks, and/or reputations are for political operatives. The one person who did not make that point was also the only person who had gotten a first job in politics by sending out resumes rather than through connections, and she had remained in that job her whole career (only one other person I talked with had been in the same organization for more than a two or three years). This is in large part inherent in campaign work: campaigns are by their nature short-lived, which means everyone who works in campaigns must change jobs at least every two years. Campaigns also tend to have periods of quick "staffing up" at key parts of the election timeline. Very few campaign positions are ever advertised; instead, people find out about jobs through word of mouth, and often positions are filled simply by someone already on the campaign asking a colleague whether she would like to "come on board." A few illustrations:

> DL: Do you have […] general theories about how people get ahead in this business?
>
> C.H.M: Yeah, and I think the bottom line is having a wide network of contacts. So for me, my—I don't know—foundational contacts were made by working on a campaign—working on the Kerry campaign in 2003, 2004. But it seems like you need to have some sort of experience where you really get to know a lot of people broadly in the industry. And that's really what you need to move up—is to be able to [create] those relationships.

Another respondent, G.R.J., described her ultimately successful attempt to get a job on Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign:

> I think I worked […] from January of '08 putting the feelers out there to people on the campaign: Hey, I'd love to come [on board]. […] It was all people I knew—it was connections I had had from consulting, it was connections I had from the [past]—you know, just the network that I'd created. And somebody I had met in my first job in Washington […], she said, Hey, I heard they're staffing up in Iowa. […] And then

> my name got popped in that, you know, kind of queue of people to potentially hire, [and I got the job].

G.R.J. followed up that story by telling me how someone she met on the Clinton campaign got his current job, at her former firm, with her help. Social capital is of course important in many fields; in political work, it is almost all that matters in hiring, according to my interviewees. Some saw this as a reasonable way to do business and told me how important it was to them to only make good recommendations, and to protect their reputation. Others (generally those in less prestigious positions) derided the glad-handing and networking aspect of the work. C.H.M. also told me:

> And to see what it takes to be successful, it's not being good at the job; it's working your network. Like that's why your good people leave-because you're not rewarded for being clever or insightful. So you know, you're rewarded for really wringing as much as you can out of your network. That's where the business is. You know, the people who are the best of the industry have both: are insightful and have a good network, but you know, I think you can get by on having a good network but you can't like get by on just being good and having good instincts is not enough.

I asked all my interviewees how they got their first jobs in politics, and how they moved from one position to the next after that; every story save the one mentioned above hinged on connections to other politicos.

(D) Using and assessing Political Instincts: "You know it when you see it"

Because of the importance of referrals for gaining work, politicos are constantly called on to make assessments of one another's competence, and are also necessarily interested in being seen as skilled themselves. While many of them said at least once during the interview that there was no objective way to judge each other's campaign skills, no one refused to tell me what kinds of people they thought were good at this work. People mentioned a number of attributes that generally (are seen as) contributing to success in any endeavor, especially "being a hard worker." More than half of my interviewees said that part of what makes someone good at working in campaigns is having the right "political instincts" or a "gut sense" or the like. Only a very few respondents, when I asked directly about the role of instincts or natural talent, argued that campaign work is something anyone can learn. For example, C.H.M. is a Democratic woman in her early 30s, who had worked in politics for 10 years but had just had a baby, and was thinking of getting out of political work:

> [DL: You said political instincts. Can you say any more [...] about sort of how you can tell if somebody has those political instincts or what that looks like?]
>
> C.H.M.: That's a tough question. I mean, it's like, you know, you know it when you see it and you know it's off when—It's funny—there's someone that comes to mind that I know does not have it, and to me that's also like clear as day that

> he's got a tin ear for this stuff, but I'm sure he has no awareness of that. So it's judgment.
>
> [DL: Can you think of a particular moment with him where you just knew he didn't have it?]
>
> One time we were asked to look at an ad and we just had totally different reactions. Like he thought it was a very solid approach I guess—it was someone that was kind of elderly—[…] and I thought the ad was stale, old but equaling stale, like out of touch. And this person thought it was establishment, you know, a powerbroker, whatever, and I just thought that that didn't resonate with where the electorate was at. […] Anyway, so that, to me, showed that he was out of touch with what was the zeitgeist of that cycle. I mean there's other times where that might be appropriate, but I didn't feel like it was.
>
> [DL: So it wasn't just that a particular ad would have always been interpreted as making this guy look stale but for that cycle it wasn't the right thing.]
>
> Right. That was my interpretation. Now, **there's no way to evaluate who's right and who's wrong**, but I felt like he was off. [emphasis mine]

This was a consistent refrain across most of my interviews, on the one hand, interviewees "know" good work when they see it, but on the other hand, it is hard to explain or judge objectively; they are using their own tacit sense of quality, in other words, when they judge whether someone else has good political judgment. Some examples (emphases mine):

> (20ish woman, Democrat, first campaign in 2004 [W.I.C]) I mean, I guess probably the key thing and it's **sort of hard to define is kind of do you get it**? And I know that's not a very specific answer, but there are definitely people in this business who just seem to…get it. They seem to absorb it, they seem to have the instincts and kind of know-and it's not something you can really teach. Sort of that **gut feeling**.
>
> (30ish man, Republican, first campaign in 2000, [B.E.A.]) Some people have a talent—a **political gut**, so to speak. It's something **you either have or you don't**. […] But some people either have that ability—like music, you know, you either are born with an ability or not.
>
> (late 40s man, Democrat, 20+ years in politics [B.O.T.]) There's no metric for that in my mind but, you know, it's just sort of you **know it when you see it**. […] And so when I interact with people**, it's clear whether or not they get it**, or they're just talking about it. And so, you know, it's more of a **gut reaction** than anything. It's nothing that I'd quantify.

> Interviewer: if there are sort of two people who've done a lot of work in Arizona or in wherever, is there anything that you sort of look for-anything that makes one better than the other? Won more races? Is it have done more races?
>
> E. Y. J. Yeah, no, I would hesitate to say there's any kind of quantitative or measurable way to distinguish that now. I don't think there is.
>
> Do you have a sense of who you think is better?
>
> Yeah, and also a personal comfort level. I mean, there are certain people that I enjoy working with. And they're reliable and they are creative and they're responsive. You know, there are some who are not any of those things.

So campaign professionals are making judgments about one another, and one another's campaign products, based on a tacit, practical sense that they have trouble articulating. This is not an uncommon feature of work decision-making, even in contexts with more clearly defined rules and standards (Dreyfus 2005), but here it is essentially the only criterion available. So what determines whether politico A believes politico B is skilled? My interviewees gave me some suggestions. One key to being perceived as a skilled political operative, according to many of my interviewees, was the ability to project the right persona. This includes having the habits and dispositions that people expect, as F.L.E., a Democrat with 15 years experience, but who was moving away from campaign and political work, told me:

> The guy who was running it was [Joe Smith], who's since gone on to do all kinds of things. […] Anyway, so [Joe Smith], who if you ever meet him, he's just like the coolest cat around. He just looks unruffled, super, like—I mean, he's not that old. He might be a year older than me or a couple years. Like, he's young and totally unflappable. Truthfully, I don't know how smart he is. He's definitely not dumb or anything, but I don't think—politics isn't brain surgery at some level. And he was one of those people who **just exudes an air of being in control. And there is clearly like a premium on that**. I actually think his thing that makes him successful and good is almost exactly the same thing that makes David Plouffe successful and good—it's just like a **calm in the storm kind of thing.**

When I asked what qualities or attributes made someone good at this, some of the most frequent answers had to do with the ability to make decisions quickly and stick with them, i.e. to project an air of authority[24]. So politicos judge one another based on the

[24] These sorts of informal, low-information, and social-network-based hiring practices all also facilitate hiring based on racial, gender, class, and cultural similarity (Cech et al. 2011; Fernandez and Fernandez-Mateo 2006;

personas they project, whether their races tend to win or lose, and the extent to which the decisions they make—ads' and speeches' form and content, voter targeting and field strategy, media plans and event schedules, among others—conform to partially-shared, often non-articulated standards and traditions of campaign practice.

(E) That leads to campaign strategies of a few types

Campaign professionals reward each other for their "good instincts," appearing "smart" or "just seeming to get it." There is not very much other information available to them to assess each others' skills and abilities, as the quotes above show. Further, given the uncertainty about the extent to which campaign tactics affect election outcomes, among both politicos and scholars of politics, it is hard to see how they could rationally make these assessments. Nonetheless, my interviewees also reported that candidates (i.e., their potential clients or employers) as well as others in the field do indeed judge campaign staff and consultants based on both the campaign tactics they produce (ads, speeches, mailers, field plans, targeting strategies), as well as based on recent campaign wins or losses.

This evaluation of campaign outputs and campaign results happens both formally and informally. The formal processes are coordinated by two organizations, the American Association of Political Consultants and the magazine *Campaigns & Elections* (formerly *Politics*). *Campaigns & Elections* publishes the win-loss records of consulting firms (but not of other politicos) each year; both organizations hold annual awards ceremonies (the Reed Awards and the Pollies) honoring entire campaigns and a wide variety of categories of campaign outputs, and *Campaigns & Elections* also recognizes "Rising Stars"—politicos under 40—with an annual feature in the magazine and a ceremony at their conference[25]. Most of the people I interviewed told me that these awards, especially the Reeds and the Pollies, are not a great indicator of quality; one person interrupted my question to say they are "complete bullshit," and quite a few described the awards as essentially a racket where connections to judges or simple volume of applications determined most honors. People I interviewed who had themselves been designated as "Rising Stars" were split about evenly on the extent to which those awards could be used to judge individuals' skills and talents as campaigners; not a single person, however, told me that the Pollies or Reed Awards were good signals of campaign products' quality. Finally, while some of my respondents indicated that the win-loss records might be a *starting* point for assessing an individuals' campaign skills, none told me that how often one's races won was sufficiently informative.

Thus, despite the existence of some formalized assessments of campaigns' and campaigners' quality, politicos still have to make judgments about each other, and about each other's work, based on their own sense of what makes for "good" or "effective" campaigning. All my interviewees seemed certain that they, themselves, were good judges of others' skills, even though many acknowledged the necessarily subjective and contestable nature of their judgments. The question, then, is how individual campaigners understand quality or effectiveness in campaigning.

I asked everyone I interviewed what makes for a good, high-quality, or effective product in their specialty. Despite asking this question consistently, though, I heard relatively little about what works to influence potential voters. The most common and consistent thing my interviewees said about voters is that they are generally not that interested in politics, and

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Gorman 2005; Rivera 2012; S. S. Smith 2005); which could help explain why the top echelons of the campaign profession are about as homogenous as Congress and other powerful professions (my analysis, see Chapter 4).

[25] I could write a whole chapter on awards in the campaign industry, but it is mostly tangential here.

not paying that much attention. My interviewees, consistent with speakers at the trainings I attended campaign management handbooks I have read, generally said that campaigns need consistent messages, easy-to-understand, simple content, and to somehow both relate to and "cut through" voters' day-to-day concerns in order to capture and hold their attention. The language they used to describe how messages can reach voters often involved physical metaphors: you have to "touch voters with [your message] repeatedly and hit them over the head. You know, you're just trying to burn a message into their brains." (G.E.J., Republican, designed some of the best-known web/TV ads for a major Presidential campaign); "we gotta come up with something creative to pound this in" (Q.U.M.); a website should "give 'em the message, hit 'em over the head with action items they can take, and make it easy for them to understand" (O.L.B.).

The belief that it is necessary to somehow force voters to pay attention was very common among my interviewees, and was one of the few specific strategies people described, despite a good deal of probing on my part to find more specific prescriptions for persuading voters. G.E.J. told me that "the rest of the world is not focused on politics. They are focused on junk TV and MTV and reality TV and what the new movies are, or viral video mash-ups on YouTube." N.E.M. explained that "You know, you've got precious few moments that if you're not communicating [in a] compelling, persuasive, easily understood way, you've missed your opportunity and you really don't get that many of them in a campaign." This understanding of voters is likely motivating a lot of the kinds of content that voters and political analysts find disturbing: if the only way to "connect" with voters is by "hitting them over the head," you will need to create messages that are simple, and/or shocking, and/or emotion- rather than analysis-based; and indeed, this is both what my interviewees said and what was recommended in the trainings I attended. Some explanations of the importance of simple, repetitive messages included:

> G.U.J.: So, you got to find a way to grab people's attention, to make it not feel political, to say something they are interested in, and then you've got to pay a lot of attention to detail in the design as well and in the writing of it, because you've got to tell them the story and the headlines quickly and succinctly. You don't want to design pieces so that you have to read every word to get the message. So every piece that we do is done so that you can get the point without reading it.
>
> O.L.B.: Is it easy to read and digest? Barack Obama's website was written for an 8th grader. John McCain's was written for a sophomore in college. You know, those types of things matter. You know, is it intuitive? [...] Or online, [...] give them links to read the diatribe on your policy position, but on the first page, you know, make it simple, make it graphical, allow them to kind of just glance at it—less than three seconds—and understand what you're trying to convey.
>
> B.E.J.: You know, you can find a messages that resonates by [...] you find a message where you juxtapose your strengths against your opponents weaknesses in such a way that you dominate the debate, [...] and repeating it and amplifying it over the course of the campaign.

But a simple, repetitive message is not enough, of course; in order to "cut through" to individual voters, interviewees generally talked about making messages surprising or penetrating in some way, as well as relating to voters:

> S.T.A.: It has to be catchy, and that can either be shocking or humorous or fact-driven. But again, it has to do with knowing your audience.
>
> O.L.B.: And, you know, does it pull at the heart strings and does it motivate somebody? [...] you either try to kill 'em with word or you try to shock them so much that they remember your message in the three seconds it takes for them to look at your piece and then throw it away.

The need to "cut through" often means negative ads:

> Q.U.M.: How can I think of some way to relate to voters, relate to their daily lives or something in their state or where they live that will make 'em remember this piece of mail. So that when they see my person's yard sign-you know, Joe Schmuck-they're gonna say, Oh, [*finger snap*] that's the guy who I got that piece of mail from. [...] If it's negative, what are the top hits against this person that I need to make jump out of this piece when someone looks at it?

Many politicos I spoke with were somewhat defensive about the need for negative advertising in campaigns:

> W.I.C.: there are a lot of people who want to run for office, and they are firmly convinced that the problem in America is the way campaigns are run, and that may be true, but you're not going to win. I mean, you know, we—I have to say, we [wouldn't] do these things if it didn't work. [...] Now, I'm not going to completely bold-face lie about somebody. There are people who will completely bold-face lie about their opponent. I won't do that. But that does work.
>
> G.E.J.: Effective negative advertising—this is always something I find interesting—Some people, it's like, Oh, we hate negative ads. And then you see these dial tests, and the dial tests—all they always score these negative ads low. But they're effective because you're trying to reinforce some sort of central message that gets that person thinking in a subconscious way. Oh, I don't know about them all on spending. You know, I don't know if I can trust this person. [...] what people say their reaction is, I completely believe is not what their reaction is.
>
> R.U.C.: And almost everyone takes liberties in a campaign in terms of how they spin the facts out there, but I do get resentful sometimes of people saying All this stuff is lies, you're just lying. You know, listen, I have a house, I have a

> family, if I went out and just lied in every piece of campaign literature that I put out, sooner or later, someone would sue me and win and I would be in trouble, so I'm careful about—I think I'm very edgy and can be very tough with campaign stuff, but I also am very serious about being fair in that—maybe fair isn't the wrong word—I'm very fact-based. The person receiving it, who's the target of the hit, may say that was really unfair, and I guess that's subjective. But it's not subjective that it was based on fact and I think that's—you know, to me, that's a big thing, especially if you believe like I do that you have to be combative in campaigns and you have to—you know, what you say has to be true. If it's not, the negative will fall apart.

W.I.B. confirmed an impression I got from a number of my interviewees:

> one underlying characteristic with a lot of political operatives that seems to be pretty consistent, that a lot of us generally enjoy negative campaign ads. You know. Both you know either that we—our campaign will wage, or that wage back at us. Just a general fascination—I mean, we like to fight. I mean, that's the whole point of it, you know. I get how people really don't enjoy negative ads, and how it cheapens the—how it can cheapen the political process. But at the same time, it is a fight, and if you're being paid to wage a campaign, you can't be the person that seeks to—that's the candidates' job, to stay above it all. The staff is those guys that are willing to fight for the candidate and, you know, do anything to help them win.

These sorts of messages may or may not be effective, but they clearly fall short of both voters' and scholars' aspirations for what democracy could and should be.

Still, the quotes above are all descriptions without clear criteria for evaluating quality; an ad might be simple and shocking without anyone in the campaign world seeing it as "good." Clearly, there is a good deal of disagreement among politicos about whether a particular campaign product, whether an ad or a poll or a speech, qualifies as "good." All of my interviewees thought their own products were generally good (though some admitted to giving some campaigns their "B" or "C" product rather than their "A" product), but were concerned that others were creating low-quality campaign output consistently. The two most common refrains I heard about others' bad products or bad decisions was that they were risk-averse and cookie-cutter. None of my informants said this was their approach, of course, but many of them identified it as a rampant problem for others. They told me about the incentives for reusing campaign content, and the disincentives for excessive innovation. Because politicos are so often judged by the outcome of their last race or by their cumulative win-loss record, despite the fact that this can have little or nothing to do with their actual skills or contributions to that campaign (as discussed above), if you do something unusual and therefore memorable (to other politicos) and your campaign loses, you are likely to receive disproportionate blame for that loss; if you do what is considered standard and your

campaign loses, it is less likely that the blame will fall to you individually. F.L.E. actually said this directly:

> The thing I personally find most interesting about political consulting is the power of conventional wisdom [...]. Basically the way the incentives end up working is that in that sort of small world of people going back and forth between party committees and consulting firms, there's basically less risk in losing, using the conventional strategy that everybody would have used than trying something that actually might work to win. Yeah. Like, if you win that way, I suppose you're probably fine, but if you lose that way, you're like—there's some danger of being sort of kicked out of the circle.

Others discussed the culture of risk-avoidance as well:

> G.E.D.: I mean, you know, there's a pervasive cover-your-ass mentality in politics, as well as government. And it's incredibly limiting. [... Tells a story about a Presidential primary campaign G.E.D. worked on that did not address a key perceived weakness of the candidate head on, although G.E.D. thought they should; I asked why the campaign decided against it, and he said the following.] It was risky. Right? They looked at all the things that could go wrong, right? And there was no sure payoff, right? So in the strategic calculus that is rife in most campaigns, it was sort of like, Well, all these things could go wrong, so therefore we shouldn't do it. And without necessarily like fairly calculating what's the cost of inaction. Right? And so, you know, the default unfortunately is inertia.
>
> H.O.J.: my sense is that from the campaign perspective, there are sort of just standard things that they want to do to cover themselves [...] from the beginning they're told, Okay, this is how things are done. [...] you know, you don't want to take a chance at not doing what everyone does.

I also heard a good deal about the power of conventional wisdom. B.O.T. said there are many "people who just say something because, you know, that's the way we always do things. Your 'I know and don't question it.'" Q.U.M. explained that "Campaigns have a hard time being too creative, 'cause they think it's like, We don't want to go that far out of the box." G.R.J. told me "A lot of times I just tended to fight with certain people who say, This is the way it works in all these cases, and they're very cookie-cutter," and K.E.J. explained that "when you've been doing this for as long as I have, and you're inside the beltway, you tend to sort of just—it's all group think."

A few people also offered some justification for conventional wisdom:

> R.O.D.: there are examples of new people coming on the scene, throwing tons of money at a race with new style that totally bomb. The old way of—like, the thing is, with the old way of—not the 'old way,' but the traditional model of like

> organizing [...], I tend to believe that if it isn't broken, don't fix it. Right, you can enhance it, right? Or bring it into the—make it consistent with the times.
>
> C.H.M.: But consulting, business model, it works because it's repetitive, right? Like, because you can take the same model and apply it to all these different campaigns. So that's why I think it's not really as creative as I expected it to be.

Nearly half of my interviewees mentioned "cookie-cutter" campaigning, either using the phrase itself or discussing, usually disparagingly, the practice of political consultants and campaign managers recycling the same strategies, slogans, and images, across many campaigns in different locations or different cycles. A few, though, spoke positively about the incentives for applying insights and strategies from one situation to others. Regardless of one's normative evaluation of repetition and conservatism in campaign strategies, it was clear to me from listening to these interviewees that campaign outputs are judged primarily against how things have always been done, which generally only allows for small, incremental changes in campaign practice. This means campaigns and campaign output look remarkably similar across time and year after year, and it is quite difficult for individual campaign operatives to try out new approaches or stray from the "hit them over the head," shock-and-repeat strategies that campaign operatives believe are effective.

Conclusion/implications

A substantial minority of my respondents were concerned about the ways that the campaign field evaluates politicos and political output. G.E.D, a Democrat in his 40s, now living in NYC and doing less political work (and more commercial and marketing work), put it most clearly:

> […] what [hiring people based on reputations] does is it breeds institutionalized mentalities and perpetuates sort of like this formulaic thinking, which I think is one of the death knells and why people hate politics, is again, it's this recycling of the same bullshit rhetoric on both sides and it's incredibly stifling to anything that's creative or innovative. […] And, you know, there's a premium on being safe and conventional in national politics, and which is—I think it's ineffective. I think it leads to, you know, running really mediocre campaigns, but I also think it's bad for the larger democratic system.
>
> [a bit later in the interview, G.E.D. expanded on this point] But another problem that's developed since politics has become more professionalized and specialized is you're seeing the hiring decisions of Senate and House races controlled more and more by the campaign committees. [...] I've seen this first-hand with like the [name of national committee]. If you're not on their approved list of consultants, you have a very limited chance of getting hired by a [top-tier] candidate. Those decisions are not based on merit. Those decisions are based on personal relationships or

> based on, again, the consultant's ability to maneuver and navigate the establishment, to ingratiate themselves. That's not to say all the people who get hired or on the preferred list are bad or incompetent. It's just that they're not necessarily there because they're really good. And that kind of favoritism and that sort of pseudo-nepotism, I think, is one of the reasons why campaigns are run so poorly, A, and, B, why they seem so cookie-cutter-is it's the same people over and over again using the same methods and techniques.
>
> [and gave an example] Democrats constantly recycle the language, "I'm gonna fight for you." And it's horribly clichéd and hackneyed and most of all ineffective, because it's so horribly—It doesn't differentiate you at all. If I've heard ten people say the same exact thing, then it just makes me think you're totally unoriginal, you don't have an original idea in your head and you have no grasp on what's happening in the country right now and what we need to do about it. And it's cheap and easy and cynical and I think a lot of voters-not all-but a lot of voters pick up on that. And those, to me, are the voters that decide elections.

So again, campaign specialists mostly do not know what works, on a campaign or individual level. Despite all the polling data at their disposal, and despite what they say in public forums and to political journalists, they do not really know what will convince voters much of the time. Even the seemingly purely objective or scientific aspects of campaigns, such as polling and targeting, are based on practitioners' acquired, practical sense as much as or more than they are based anything that rises to the standards of social science. Many of my interviewees, in describing these sorts of work, made this explicit in a way they would not when promoting themselves to potential clients or to journalists reporting on their work. The picture of campaigning painted in the trainings and conferences I attended is one of largely rational, informed experts confidently plotting the best course given all available knowledge. While it is certainly the case that specialists in electoral production know a great deal about campaigning, much of this knowledge is received wisdom and imitation of what others have done; some is accurate, and some may not be, but even when political producers suspect that the usual course of action may not actually be the most effective technique, they are constrained by their perception that doing something perceived as politically risky could endanger their careers. My favorite example is this exchange with a well-regarded (and terse) communications consultant, C.A.M.:

> *Interviewer: And when you're thinking specifically about communications that are targeted at sort of the general public-at voters-*
>
> C.A.M.: No such thing. [There are] a million people in this country, there's no such thing as a general public.
>
> *Okay. So how do you think about it then, if you're not-*
>
> There's Latino, non-college men 30 to 40 in suburban Albuquerque with families, blue collar—that's an audience.

And so you're crafting a message specifically for that.

Yeah.

And do you ever craft a message specifically that's for multiple of those? Or [are you] always really just trying to target one?

We try and target one and have it work for the rest. But we really push people to identify who's your focal point? Your fulcrum demographic.

So there's a lot of research that goes into that.

Can. Most people we work for don't have the cash to do the research. So they basically got to intuit it. Deduce and intuit it.

So that's a lot of that political instinct probably just to figure that out?

Yeah.

So much of their work is fundamentally un-quantifiable, even the parts that relate to quantitative data, and while they are aware of this, to get a next job, as campaign staff or consultants, they need to impress the other politicos around them. Which means that there is a big incentive to do what is known, and safe, and expected—to stick with the conventional wisdom about how to do politics. That conventional wisdom shifts, slowly, but it generally means either boring, non-informative ads, or these sort of sensationalistic "memorable" negative ads, based on the theory that most people need to be "hit over the head" with politics in order for political communication to make any impression at all.

It also means campaigns are slow to adapt techniques that have actually been shown to be very effective. For example, at least through 2010 one of the key tenets of received wisdom about campaign strategy was that there was no point in trying to sway "unlikely" or infrequent voters, but there is strong evidence that even a single contact can dramatically increase turnout among this group (Michelson, Garcia Bedolla, and Green 2009). A similar story of campaigners' reluctance to adopt new strategies is told in the recent journalistic account of Obama's 2008 campaign, *The Victory Lab* (Issenberg 2012) and the development of the data and targeting techniques they deployed.

However, two notes of caution are warranted with regard to Issenberg's work. First, these transformations are rarely as radical as their proponents suggest. When campaign operatives talk on the record to journalists, they have a deep interest in appearing to be on the "cutting edge" of campaign strategy in order to impress their next clients and colleagues. But this can only work if the new technique they are advocating already makes sense to the cohort of operatives ahead of them and around them, just as "avant garde" of a given moment tends to have a particular relationship to the previous generation's "avant garde" (Pierre Bourdieu 1996a). Second, this is but one entry in an on-going genre of journalism which describes new developments in campaigning as radical transformations. Issenberg's book is cast as a battle between "geeks" and "gurus," between conventional-wisdom-bound older campaigners and a new generation of data-driven analysts. This is nearly identical to the story told *The Election Men* (Rosenbloom 1973), written nearly 30 years earlier, about the new "professional campaign managers" who saw themselves as skilled professionals, bringing "scientific, or at least objective, views into an arena long dominated by myth and incompetence" (p. 99).

None of this is to say, of course, that campaigns' strategies are entirely unrelated to communicating with or mobilizing voters; surely many campaign tactics make some difference to individual voters. And, as one of my interviewees pointed out, it is absolutely not the case that either side in an election could just stop campaigning and let the partisan makeup of the electorate or the state of the economy determine the outcome—any candidate who didn't campaign would almost certainly lose. But given two sides with professional campaign teams, most political operatives I talked with, and most of political science, agree that campaigns rarely determine election outcomes, and when they do matter they do so in uncertain and unpredictable ways..

I have shown in this chapter that what we see in campaigns is not primarily the outcome of campaign decision-makers' cynical or rational or research-based ideas about what moves voters. Campaign output cannot be fully understood just by looking at research on campaigns, or by speculating about political operatives' motivations in the abstract. Instead, campaigns' output is created within a field of competition for positions. Individual politicos want to be "at the table" on the next campaign, or, if they are consultants, to drum up business. In order to succeed in this field, they need to be perceived as having good "political instincts," which largely means following or modestly improving on prevailing norms, without, of course, generally acknowledging that that is what they are doing.

Political sociologists and political scientists pay great attention to questions of how individuals relate to politics—their positions on issues, beliefs about democracy and government, and how and why they vote or abstain. All these political positions are necessarily responses to the actual politics on offer, much of which is produced in campaigns. Certainly the internal dynamics of the campaign field are not the only reason campaigns look the way they do, nor are campaigns' strategies the only reason American voter turnout is so low. But these factors are a key part of the story, one that has been left out by political science's studies of campaigns and voters[26].

[26] Or, as Bourdieu put it: "the political field is the site in which, though the competition between the agents involved in it, political products, issues, programmes, analyses, commentaries, concepts and events are created – products between which ordinary citizens, reduced to the status of 'consumers', have to choose, thereby running a risk of misunderstanding that is all the greater the further they are from the place of production" (1991b, 172).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This project is a study of the production of electoral politics at the intersection of the political and cultural fields. I examined the social origins, career paths and perspectives of the hired professionals who craft the strategies, messages, and images of national-level campaigns. These specialists in political production have a profound influence both on the content of American politics and on politicians themselves, yet they had not been studied as an entire field within the field of power until now.

In this work, I have tried to do three things. First, I have tried to gain a comprehensive understanding of the field of electoral production, by focusing on both the structural and cultural features of campaign work, and by including in my analysis not only political consultants, but all kinds of specialists in electoral production, as well as aspiring campaign workers. I have provided the first estimates of the demographic makeup of the field as a whole, as well as accounts of the typical entry points and trajectories for "politicos" and the unique aspects of this field that separate it from other kinds of work.

To do that, I made what I consider my second key contribution, drawing on Bourdieu's and others' analyses of cultural fields as well as studies from American political science and sociology, to approach the world of electoral politics as a "field of cultural production" rather than only as a site of competition over interests or a simple vehicle for domination. People have practical, tacit relations to political messages and images, just as they do with any other kind of cultural product. These dispositions are formed through family, schooling, and work, and are thus deeply tied to class, gender, race, ethnicity/nationality and other principles of classification and forms of inequality. This is true for the people who produce political content (such as skilled professionals of electoral campaigns) as well as for potential voters.

Third, I have illuminated some of the mechanisms which may explain the disjuncture between much social science research on effective voter mobilization and political communication, and the actual practices of campaigns. The first explanation is simply that those inside any field of symbolic production are resistant to seeing anyone outside their own field as capable of producing relevant knowledge. Some social scientists have occasionally bridged this divide between the academic and campaign fields, but it remains a difficult task. Second, while "politicos" working on campaigns genuinely want to win wherever possible, they also want to maintain their reputations, which are crucial to their continued employment in the field. Going against the received wisdom and unquestioned norms about how campaigns ought to be run is thus often perceived as a poor career choice, even when it might in fact be a good choice from the perspective of campaign strategy. Finally, despite the increasing quantity and quality of data available to and within campaigns, the vast majority of decisions in national-level campaigns must still be made amidst a great deal of uncertainty about how a given strategy or communication will interact with the whole landscape of an electoral contest. Campaigns involve the creation of cultural objects—messages and images and themes—and it is not possible to know exactly how a particular television ad will be received, or what effect targeting one set of voters over another in a particular place, time, and election cycle will have on the eventual outcome of a race.

This is the first comprehensive study of the social structure, dispositions, and strategies of the full array of specialists—not only consultants, but also campaign staff and advisors—who produce national-level political campaigns. I drew on data from a wide array of sources. I produced and analyzed an original dataset of the 2004, 2006, and 2008 positions, backgrounds and career biographies of 4,901 national-level campaign professionals. I conducted in-depth interviews with 57 of these specialists in electoral production, from both parties, most political specialties, and at all levels of seniority. I complemented my own data

with secondary analysis of a nationally-representative survey of political consultants. Finally, I supplemented all this with four months of full-time work on a presidential campaign and direct observations of conferences and trainings for aspiring and current political professionals.

There is more work to be done on these topics; my "politicos" dataset is set up to facilitate a network analysis of electoral producers' connections to one another and paths through their careers; I believe these analyses will confirm my interviewees' descriptions of the role of referrals and ties in their careers.

I have tried to show how the structure and culture of the field of electoral production work to limit access to campaign work to only those with sufficient social, cultural, and economic capital. I believe that the incentives and goals that operate in campaigns—the importance of connections and referrals, and the informality of hiring and promotion, among other things—serve to encourage conventional approaches to communicating with voters. In Chapter 3 I discussed the assumptions and norms of campaign work, and in Chapter 4 I showed how the requirements for beginning a career in electoral production produce a field which is just as rarefied as occupations with far more institutionalized hurdles for potential entrants. In Chapter 5 I showed that the most-advantaged political consultants are also the most likely to embrace negative campaign tactics, and in Chapter 6 I showed the ways my interviewees feel constrained by the processes of advancement in campaigns and thus adhere to the conventional wisdom, sometimes against their own better judgment.

These analyses combine to show that campaign production is an autonomous field, with barriers to entry, standards of behavior, and ways of judging political products that separate it from other parts of the political world and the field of power. They may also shed some light on the forces that turn so many people away from politics. Political messages are produced by an exclusive group, cut off in some ways from "regular people," understandably uncertain about whether, when, and how what they do affects campaign outcomes, and thus by necessity at least as interested in each other's judgments of the political products they create as in effectively communicating with potential voters.

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