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Undergraduate Political Science Majors Make Meaning of their Political Experiences

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ABSTRACT

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Statistical data and popular opinion suggest broad democratic participation is declining. Low rates of formal political participation are especially pronounced among the youngest eligible voters, including by inference, traditional-age college students. An extensive literature review examines explanations for political participation among citizens, including social location, psychological effects, structural barriers, and rational choice analysis. These explanations encompass important considerations: community and social capital, generational cohort theory, education, and other influences promote democratic – though not necessarily electoral – participation. Neither political science nor student affairs literatures adequately address college students' participation in electoral politics. Student affairs does embrace a focus on non-electoral, community-based experiences. This research benefits student development professionals, who will reflect on the perspectives and experiences, opportunities available to students on their own campuses, through orthodox and non-electoral political participation.

A framework incorporating three interrelated aspects of political identity development is presented. Political awareness evolves over a lifetime of receiving political influences, key influences shaping political awareness. As political awareness develops, the citizen selectively seeks political influences, thus further entrenching political

awareness. These two aspects predispose the citizen to attend to certain relevant issues, and provide definition to a citizen's interpretation of political issues.

Ten students studying the political system and citizen participation took part in a series of interviews, describing the meaningfulness of their own political involvement. These interviews formed stories, personal profiles, and collected relevant issues identified by participants. Students' political awareness, a reflection of the political influences they have known, and the issues they described as important, are included.

Key findings reveal the meaning and perspectives the participants have of democracy. They believe it is maintained through common political activity, and students expect like-democratic participation of their fellow citizens. Participants question the effectiveness of political protest and the responsiveness of their government to their beliefs. Alarmingly, current security legislation following 9/11 has invoked participants' fear of our government. Key influences shape participants' political awareness, influences such as public protest, internships, and non- (or less obvious) political events, such as service-learning activities. Students' political awareness interacts with their recognition of issues, ultimately contributing to their democratic education.

Acknowledgements

An almost trite sentiment in so many statements of acknowledgements is that projects like this cannot happen without the help of scores of people. I have found the sentiment nevertheless true.

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I miss my cohort group, and I miss the community of colleagues and friends Kristin and I were fortunate enough to find while living in Colorado. Moving 2300 miles away following my coursework separated me from other UNC students and my support group to finish this dissertation. Writing this document has therefore taken additional time. However, seeing these colleagues at conferences or exchanging the occasional telephone or emails has helped me be persistent. Here in Maine, though, I've found mentors or fellow students who were terribly helpful. Professors like Drs. Elizabeth Allan, Amy Fried, and James Warhola helped guide me through relevant literature and helped me reflect on the direction of my study and the meaning of the work. Of these, Dr. Fried was especially helpful both in identifying key authors and schools of democratic thought and in approaching the students who were the participants for this study. My dissertation group – Jose, Ana, Marwin, and Laurel – were great readers and editors.

Finally, I have enjoyed a great amount of support from my family. The personal disclosures that punctuate Chapter One reflects the value I place on how I was raised and the opportunity and the support I have enjoyed from my parents. What it does not convey is that as an adult child, Mom and Dad, and their respective new partners, have continued the emotional and tangible support, allowing me to pursue this dream. My

extended family – my in-laws and my siblings – helped me keep the scope, timeline, and importance of this dissertation in perspective. Part of me regrets the evenings I was away from my children, the weekend days not at home, the understanding my kids have had to exhibit.

Ultimately, this project could never have been completed without that time, nor without the help and encouragement of my wife, Kristin. She helped me find and dedicate that precious time. She helped without question; she found interesting books for me at the public library, sources that pepper this document. She reminded me that this was mine to pursue as I wished. She worked to support us, sometimes in crummy jobs; she managed our home and provided perspective to this work, all the while pursuing her own educational goals. She has given me the strength and resolve to keep my eyes on this particular goal. Through this exercise I've come even more to know our relationship is a treasure. She deserves the greatest "thank you" I have.

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Prologue

Evolving Practices of Research

I have found working on the dissertation to be a humbling experience. It seems that in writing it, I have made repeated confessions concerning the progress, paradigm, or direction of this project. In Chapter One, I confessed to familial and community influences in my personal political development, a contributing factor to my belief structure. Recognizing how the influences of the students in the study – and my own influences – contributed to a respective understanding of one's level of awareness is important. My previous experiences have caused me to be predisposed to believe those influences are principal among the reasons for political interest as described by the college-student-participants of the study. "Influences" is one of the primary themes undergirding Chapter Two, a review of the literature surrounding the development of political interest. Later in Chapter One, I confessed to having a political ideology that is progressive and liberal and a voting record that typically favors Democrats. This record reflects both my political ideology and an unwillingness, or at least an unpreparedness, to participate in third party politics. I believe that change in our system must come from those already in power.

The spring semester, 2003, was an exciting time to be at the University of Maine. There were more politically oriented events there during that semester than had occurred in previous semesters. Most notably, the semester started with United States, involved in its campaign to have inspectors in Iraq, eventually seeking U.N. approval for a war in

Iraq to force both regime change and the destruction of weapons of mass destruction. The war and the protests were a congealing issue for the participants and as context of the study. During one interview, I confessed to a student

> it's precarious. I'm trying to decide how to say, within the context of my study, that a President for whom I did not vote, started a war with which I don't agree, right at the time that I'm asking politically-interested students about their political involvement. How do you say, "I'm lucky that we're at war?" Still, I'm convinced that George, Jr., had us going toward war before his fingers had left the Bible; this is what he wanted to do.

Protests were occurring around the globe, and this campus and the local city, Bangor, were active places. Bert, Jack, and Sarah attended one on-campus rally. As I note in his profile, Ryan did not attend a rally, but – and not without some irony – described how exciting the presence, even omnipresence, of demonstrations is and should be for traditional-age college students. In particular, there were four speakers on campus that contributed to a rich political sense at the university during the spring semester. Amy Goodman, the news anchor for democracynow.org; Jim Hightower, a nationally-syndicated radio personality whose humor and populism I have long enjoyed; Gary Hart, the one-time and perhaps future U.S. Presidential candidate; and former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney visited campus.

In Chapter Three, I admitted to be stressed in my outlook to complete this work as a constructivist study, for I am by nature and training drawn to more orthodox, staid research methodologies. Nonetheless, the value of this research is grounded, in part, in the flexibility and adaptability afforded by the choice of a constructivist paradigm. Its application to student affairs work appealed to me and made this research more meaningful (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Broido & Manning, 2002; Jones, et al., 2002; Hatch, 2002; Stage & Associates, 1993; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2002).

Compiling the data from the interviews and coming to understand the meaning of political involvement – what the students perceived – gave me a great opportunity to reflect on the meaning I myself make about politics. The conversations were inspiring and enjoyable. In fact, I told one of the students I was interviewing and told a qualitative methods class I visited to talk about this very project that it was probably the most enjoyable thing – career- or academics-wise – I have done since I moved to Maine. Through the discussion of the issues, the recognition of the influences, the confirmation of awareness on the part of the students, my own level of awareness was heightened.

The first assignment I had in the doctoral program was an annotated bibliography, and one of the articles I briefed was Griffiths (1995), in which she suggested that researchers are tempted to research things that they are themselves interested in. The obvious benefits and detractions accrue to doing research on a phenomenon in which the researcher already has an attachment. As warnings go, hers was headed. I enjoyed this project. I was cautious to ensure that the participants' words, not mine, appear in the data. While I had a great amount of latitude in organizing, presenting, and ignoring extraneous data, I have done my best to be authentic (Lincoln, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Still, I admit that I liked the topic and enjoyed the relationships I had with the students involved. I liked finding out how these willing participants make meaning of their political awareness, political influences, and the political issues of the day.

Chapter One

Community, Democracy, and Voting: A Sense of Belonging

It was only six blocks from the house where I grew up. For me, a little off-orange, nearly pale peach, painted house at the corner of 4th and Wyandotte represents democratic participation. The humble one-story house had pine siding and probably was filled by six rooms, plus a covered porch walled in to create extra living space several years before I first saw it. Certainly livable; absolutely characteristic of a modest, lived in, working class family home. It smelled of mustiness, that faint but discernable odor created by antiques and years of closed-up windows. The walls had knickknacks in the front room, the only room I ever saw. In my mind, the steps to the front door were not poured concrete ... odd, since its first owner likely worked at the concrete mix plant that closed the same year I was born, about two miles out of town, right on the Katy Railroad tracks. Instead, there were stacks of cement blocks, six rows in total in a pyramid, shaped like steps.

The grass grew in the summer and was mowed regularly, complementing the home. Even though it was mowed, the grass was rarely trimmed at the sidewalk, curbs, or driveway; the latter was formed from crushed gravel. At the corner of lot, a flagpole was placed on which I would see, nearly every day as I walked to school or rode my bike on the way to the drug store or baseball practice, a United States flag.

I do not know the homeowners' names nor do I know if I ever met the occupant. I remember it not because of its appearance – except for its color, it looked like so many other houses in my childhood neighborhood. Some of my friends lived nearer to the house than I

did, but the relative proximity to others' homes is not the reason, either. The reason I remember it now, 20-some-odd years later, is this house was the polling place for the ward and precinct where we lived, the only neighborhood I knew before I went to college. The first time I cast a vote was in that house, for my mom for school board. The second, and final, time I voted in that house, I cast a vote for Al Gore, in the Democratic Primary on Super Tuesday, 1984. Unlike the peach colored house, Gore continued to be in my political life, for I had the chance to help reelect Senator Gore while I was in Knoxville for grad school, to vote twice for him as Vice President, and most recently to cast a vote for him in the presidential election of 2000.

Every other time I have voted, it has happened at a school, library, or public building, a place that is, well, not someone's home. The American Legion hall where we now vote has different smells, an industrial entrance, and a large parking lot. The hall, a place for veterans to interact with one another, has a symbolism that never could be approached by private home. Its spacious, voting day accommodations and the rows of folding tables cast a different ambiance, a less intimate environment, than the wood-paneled living room.

I am a parent now. Each election day, we take a family trip, children in tow, to vote at the American Legion hall. The ritual of voting is important, and it seems that the older child is developing some understanding of the importance of the exercise. Her knowledge is congruent with her understanding that there are multiple states in the United States, that the country is represented by what she calls the "states flag," and that some of her daycare classmates are from other countries. As meaningful as all these influences are – voting, the American Legion, my children and their budding understanding of democracy – I still reflect, each time I cast a vote, on that house, that house on Wyandotte Street. That house conjures up memories that ground my political awareness, memories of the influences I have

had in my life. I recall images of citizens filing in to vote, of community, of neighborhood affiliation, and of the gift and rights of democracy.

Statement of the Problem

Lower turnouts in successive national elections and other measures of political participation (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Burnham, 1987; Miller & Levitin, 1976; Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976; Patterson, 2002; Piven & Cloward, 1987, 2000; also see Table 1 and Figure 1) suggest participation in politics is decreasing. Speaking four months ago at the Kennedy Library in Boston, former President Clinton (2003) conceded the

> thing I'm worried about – and I think our young people get a bum rap, being selfish, X-Generation, stuff like that ... the truth is this generation has provided more community service than any other generation in the history of our republic; however – they are also less likely to vote, partly because of cynicism. It bothers me that so many people think it doesn't matter. I mean, after 2000, after the election, how could anybody think it doesn't matter?

His comments reflect an emergent, general agreement that U.S. citizens are only moderately concerned with their government. This concern extends more prominently upon the youngest voters in our society, those who are part of Generation X and the Millennial Generation.

A new literature is developing to demarcate the Millennial Generation from Generation X (e.g., Arnett, 2000; Eskilson & Wiley, 1999; Flacks, 2001; Gay & Sberna, 2002; Mattson, 1999; Sberna & Gay, 2000). The popular press is also a source to understand Generation X and the Millennials (e.g., Coupland, 1991; Halstead, 1999; Haworth, 1997; Howe & Strauss, 1993; Loeb, 1994, 1999; Rhoads, 1997a; Strauss & Howe, 1998, 2000). Murray (in Reis, n.d.) advanced generalized traits of the two generations and noted that

Generation X'ers were the first real generation to be "planned," completing families for dual career parents who divorced at high rates, thus having developed independence, pragmatism, and cynicism. He suggested they lack patience, are comfortable with technology, and prefer keeping their options open rather than committing to a plan or direction. Members of the Millennial Generation, in comparison, have lived with omnipresent threats (e.g., the internet, AIDS, drugs, movies, vacant lots, etc.) but also have extremely involved parents who have high expectations and provide great resources to their children, contributing to a situation where "any sign of mediocrity is met with help from all sorts of experts" (Reis, n.d., ¶ 31, citing Murray, 1997). Their parents have provided a lifetime of organized activity (Brooks, 2001; Murray, 1997). These members of the Millennial Generation take technology for granted and generally work hard toward accomplishing fixed goals. However, they lack the independence and cynicism that Generation X'ers exhibit (Murray, 1997).

Brooks (2001) described today's youth as too dependent on parents and authority to care or decide for themselves, although he did not separate the 18-to-25 year old age cohort into the two generations noted. He identified many of the same socialization practices expressed by Murray (in Reis, n.d.). It is evident that for members of these two generations, political participation frequently is seen through community volunteerism and registration to vote rather than actually voting (Anderson, 1995; Chambers & Phelps, 1993; Davis-Packard, 2000; Hirsch, 1993; IOP Harvard, 2000; Mayrack, 1998).

Today's youth demonstrate generationally-shared predispositions to non-electoral methods of civil political participation. Eighteen-to-twenty-four year olds as a macro group have rates of voting and participation that lag behind other age groups (USCB, 2000, 2002a, 2002c). However, within these, college students register and vote more often than their cohorts with no college experience (Tarrance Group, 2000). This supports the findings that

attending college "indicates the presence of reliable, if modest, college effects on increases in students' political orientations and activities" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 287).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study research is to understand how college seniors – traditional-age political science majors at a New England university – who represent various political ideologies, ambitions, and interests, have decided on their own political participation. Of particular interest are student motivations to participate; the paths to political interest; student expectations of political participation; and, importantly, self-perceptions about their own political behaviors. Understanding the influences on and the awareness of politically interested students toward electoral participation is the overarching purpose of the research.

Research Questions

The primary research questions of this study include:

How do political science majors make meaning of personal political activity?

How do participants interpret their political behavior and activity?

How did study participants learn about or decide to be involved in politics and political activities?

What motivates study participants to consider political activism or the lack of it?

Significance of study

Through this research, the meaning attached to civil political behavior may be revealed, leading to student development professionals' increased understanding of student activism. Because education has as part of its mission preparing young citizens to participate in a democratic-republican form of government, educators should want to identify the

activities or elements of the curriculum or educational environment that support that goal. Thus, student affairs professionals can provide activities contributing to political maturity.

Second, the paths that have stimulated the student participants toward political maturity could increase student political clout among legislators. It may also provide students with an understanding of the tools to be involved in their communities after they have left the university. In this way, higher education would be better preparing students for participation in their government, while simultaneously ensuring higher education benefits from attention by elected leaders.

Finally, the findings from this in-depth case analysis will provide meaningful conceptual insights and an ample foundation for continued research in this area of inquiry, aiding in theory development for others exploring the phenomenon of political interest development. Student development professionals will benefit by utilizing appropriate skills sets (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Stage & Associates, 1993) to apply the study's findings to their professional practice, thus deepening practitioner understanding, consideration, and implementation of initiatives to encourage democratic participation.

Who inspired my political activism?

Family, schools, and local institutions are contributors, or agents (Davies, 1977; Renshon, 1977), to political socialization. I recognize a compatibility with political socialization and the explanations I have attached to my own personal, political development. I attribute my journey toward political activism to family members as agents of political socialization, my schools' roles in my socialization, and my choices to continue this journey.

Family as an agent of political socialization.

My parents were civically minded and taught me to be patriotic, to value my community, and to exercise the right to vote. I wish they had taken me with them to vote more often, but their trips to the polls often happened early, on their ways to work. Still, I sometimes did vote with them. I watched my mom run for, get elected, and thrice re-elected to the local school board, and much of my adolescence is punctuated with hearing her perspective on items before the board. We subscribed to local papers. More, perhaps, than in our neighborhood, I learned about community in our church, where we were heavily involved and attended at least twice each week. My parents were faithful givers and were involved in the church's business decisions. Civically, I watched my parents display interest in public politics and policy decisions, and one of their good friends was a man who, when I was in high school, was our town mayor and who today is a State Representative. It was from him I learned my most important lesson about labor unions, whose social good concerning workplace rules may be less germane as workers' laws have evolved. Labor unions do, however, provide a role as a Political Interest Group, supporting workers' values. I was too young in high school to appreciate this role, a role under assault for the last two decades by wealthier participants.

My family had a U.S. flag that my dad would put out often. By the time I was in high school, dad had installed a light, focused on the flagpole, so that we could leave the flag flying overnight. Patriotism was an integral part of my cultural adolescence, and I learned it from my parents, their friends, and the teachers at my schools.

Schools as agents of political socialization.

We had an all-school assembly each Monday morning. I clearly remember sitting on the floor of the gym at Lincoln Elementary to listen to announcements or sing a song of

some kind. These assemblies always started with the Pledge of Allegiance, which incidentally I said at least once a week. The Pledge was a part of Vacation Bible School every summer. I participated in school and local athletics, which included having a flag sown to my ball uniform and hearing the Star Spangled Banner. Even when I wasn't playing, I was frequently at games, as an observer or as a member in the marching band, in which case I was performing, not only listening, to the National Anthem. Despite its cliché quality, I vividly remember a night during the summer before my junior year of college, and my dad taking me to a baseball game – the local American Legion team – a couple of days after I had completed a study abroad experience. Returning home and participating again in this ritual with my father, hearing the National Anthem, smelling of the grass and hotdogs, and feeling the cooling evening air all conspired to draw a few tears.

I have a strong state-specific patriotism that complements a national patriotism. I have lived in several states, and have demonstrated loyalty toward and active knowledge and awareness of local issues in each of them. Though I have not lived in my home state since I graduated from college, I think of it still as home. My parents took me to the state capitol building for a tour when I was six or seven. I was wowed by the House and Senate chambers, and was blessed by the tour guide who allowed me to sit in the governor's chair – the governor was out of the office. I avidly read tour books or the captions on the state map, as well as the encyclopedia description of my home state. I understood the symbolism of what is a complicated state flag. I remember attending a speech offered by the governor at one of the parks in town when I was in fifth grade. Our class walked from the school to the park, the park next to the town library, where the Governor stood in a gazebo and gave a speech. Our teachers had us write a reaction paper. I remember I loved the experience.

I enjoyed an expansion of my political interest in college. During college, I participated in Student Government, model United Nations, and an intercollegiate legislature. In these experiences, I had a chance to be a leader, a politico, a decision maker, a decision influencer, a loser on some issues, a winner on others, and a participant in student and mock committee and legislative actions. I was also involved in Speakers' Bureau, as chair for two years. Speakers' Bureau was a well-funded committee responsible for bringing guest lecturers to campus, and I invariably lobbied for politically recognizable speakers.

As an undergraduate, I was fortunate enough to discuss social policy and civil politics with faculty members; one of the professors recruited me to hang election placards in public areas for a state attorney general candidate, a person whom I did and still do admire. This professor later chaired a committee that selected interns for the State Legislature. When I applied, I was selected as an intern for the State Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Speaker of the House greeted me by name every day. My desk was in the capitol building, meaning that I was able to reexperience, every day, the awe that I first felt when I made that childhood visit. It was an enormously fulfilling and overwhelming semester.

As a result of my involvement in Student Government and my internship for the Speaker of the House, I received a Gubernatorial appointment to a Blue Ribbon Commission to redesign the working relationship between the 26 public higher education institutions in Oklahoma. I was green, to be sure. The knowledge, experiences, and – as I reflect on it now – the unspoken agendas in the room were overwhelming. Still, the experience was a heady one, and I knew governmental policy was something that held my interest.

Personal interests.

Since college, I have waffled in how strongly I advocate for public officials or issues in each successive election. This varied outspokenness results from differing qualities of relationships I have had with the students at that given institution, questions of the propriety of a live-in residence life professional being too boisterous in candidate advocacy, and my passion for the candidates' stances. Still, I have voted in each general election and most primary and local elections. I have displayed campaign material in each U.S. Presidential election campaign since I began college. As compared to my friends and associates, I disproportionately choose to watch CNN, C-SPAN, and the PBS Newshour. Sunday morning talk shows are a must. I listen to NPR, gravitate toward political-grounded fiction and non-fiction alike, love television history documentaries (especially related to war and U.S. history), select television programs that use politics as a backdrop, and enjoy reading newspapers. I especially like the commentary or editorial pages, probably because newspapers use those pages to influence public policy. They concisely argue for policy formation, changes, or stability, using available facts. It is important to be wary, as the arguments are not always fully forthcoming, but the formation of the argument is appealing. My appreciation for most of these activities – news radio and television, newspapers and editorial pages, and politically-based reading and viewing – began while I was in college, and through them and because of them, I have developed a strong political interest. I am, as a friend helped me realize, "a political junkie" (see Thompson, 1995).

Promoting their new book, Paul Begala and James Carville, "two of the most well known and successful [Democratic] political strategist working today" (Rose, 2002, p. 1), appeared on the Charlie Rose program. Describing his attraction to politics, Carville said,

"...because it matters to me. It matters to me. I've got a reason to say it. Yes. I think politics matters" (p. 6). His words resonate with me.

Political Assumptions

My world-filter accepts facts and interprets them according to a political understanding, one that is partisan. I find the exercise of politics appealing. I believe that political socialization is an appropriate role of community organizations, schools, and families. I also have political assumptions that influence this study. These assumptions occur on two vectors. One vector relates to my admittedly partisan views of American politics. I typically support the initiatives and the members of the Democratic Party. I find the party's stances congruently reflect my own. The principles of the Party, when the Party is at its best, more closely align with my beliefs about the appropriate direction for our society, economic position, and the role and importance of manufacturing and organized labor; my interpretation of civil and religious liberties; and my ethical positions on issues. Following politics and endorsing these party initiatives colors my opinions and invigorates my interest in politics. I believe the Democratic Party is more likely to make proper decisions for the present and the future (see Kuttner, 2002).

Second is the disservice I believe youth, and more to the point, college students – as a collective political interest group – inflict upon themselves by voting at low rates. I believe that age is discriminated against, that barriers are enacted to suppress the youth vote. Issues disproportionately affecting youth are decided in favor of older, more established citizens because of their voter turnout. I believe that student apathy toward voting has far reaching consequences, not only for students, but for the entire country as well. Mayrack (1998), and countless others, have noted that 18-year olds are required to register for the selective service but may not purchase alcohol. Because youth is so easily discriminated against, Congress will

continue to limit accessible, affordable higher education by underfunding student loans and federal Pell grants; dismiss social issues such as drugs, marriage, and racial or sexual equality; and restrict access to leaders, including retaining or reinforcing barriers to registration and voting. Leaders repeatedly fail to demonstrate their resolve to reform the unsustainable Social Security system in ways that could provide any benefit to today's youth. Student issues will be ignored for the desires of special interests. When students fail to vote, lawmakers ignore their voices, because ignoring student-driven agendas does not affect future re-election bids of incumbent candidates.

Theoretical Framework for Study

Education at all levels has a responsibility of promoting citizenship, an assumption articulated by Emile Durkheim (1956). He asserted that education is loosely defined as a totality of influences that are made upon one's intelligence or will. He and John Locke (1692/n.d.) present an underlying philosophy of the student as a tabula rasa, with teacher and student assigned status within a hierarchical and one-way relationship, and both are persuasive in demonstrating schools as an effective agent of political socialization (also see Davies, 1977; Kinder & Sears, 1985; Renshon, 1974, 1977).

Assuming students are passive, blank tablets upon which educators scribe lessons is a shallow approach. Rather than didactic, education is a process that is an "adaptive activity" (von Glasersfeld, 1995, p. 6). Anticipating and promoting active learning – acquiring information, establishing an understanding of the information's cultural foundations, and through these acts constructing knowledge, typifies the constructivist approach (Hein, 1991; Papert, 1996). Socialization and top-town teaching has an undisputable influence, but "learners construct knowledge for themselves – each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning – as [they learn]. Constructing meaning is learning" (Hein, 1991).

"Constructivism," wrote Charmaz (2000), "assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p. 510).

My experiences in the last two decades are in educational settings, and these experiences lead me to a philosophy of education that is consistent with constructivism, both as an epistemology and a learning theory (Fosnot, 1996; Vygotsky, 1962/1986). The processes of education, including that education that is cultural or multi-cultural are based upon personal experiences, might or might not be similar to the perceptions of those around him or her, and are context-specific (Durkheim, 1956; Hatch, 2002; Manning, 1999a, 1999b; Papert, 1996; Stake, 2000; von Glasersfeld, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962/1986). The cultural education in public schools supports inculcation. Likewise, Boyer (1987) asserted that in a collegiate environment, outside-of-classroom education complements formal instruction.

College students undergo political development during their college years (e.g., Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). The effects of college have been identified as ideological (Abramowitz, 1983; Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Delucchi, 1993; Green & Astin, 1985; Guimond, 1992; Guimond & Palmer, 1996; Mayer, 1992; Middleton & Putney, 1963a, 1963b; Mueller, 1988; Norton, 1991; Olson & Zanna, 1993; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985; Ryder, 1965), developing a sense of political activism (Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Anderson, 1995; Beeler, 1985; Buhle, 1989; Cartwright, 1995; Chambers & Phelps, 1993; Cohen, 1989; Lipset, 1993; Miser, 1988; Paterson, 1994; Solomon & Fishman, 1964; Vellela, 1988), or limited to developing an interest in politics or the political system (Gutmann, 1987; Handley, 2001; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994). Activities such as service-learning are regarded for their contribution to citizenship (McDonald & Associates, 2002; Myers-Lipton, 1996;

Rhoads, 1997b; Vail, 2002; Voices, 2002), although some question the success of such attempts (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones, 2002).

Organization of Study

A theme emerged throughout the planning and execution of this study. While it was not overtly noted in the proposal stage, the plan for this study has continually been 1) on recognizing influences politically aware students recognize as important, and 2) understanding their awareness. Influences, which may be past experiences, such as happens with political socialization, or current influences, such as the news sources the students consume, and relevant issues being contemplated by participants, were explored. The students and I co-constructed the recognition of these influences and observed how one's political awareness in unison contributes to personal understanding of current issues. These issues are defined by the students in relation to their past influences and their awareness. All three – awareness, influences, and issues – are both fixed and fluid; they are all distinct and separate, yet intertwined in a complex manner (see Figure 2, page 133). The product and process of this interplay is germane.

Definition of Terms

It is common practice, and good practice, to provide definition to terms that populate any document. Indeed, an understanding of several terms in student affairs, political participation, and qualitative research and constructivism literatures are important within this study. Student affairs terms used in this document are sufficiently general for everyday understanding, and terms related to qualitative research is described in the context of Chapter Three. However, some sociology- and political science-related terms require more convenient definitions. These include "democratic participation," "social location,"

"political efficacy," "social capital," "political socialization," "political culture," "political trust," "generational cohorts," and "rational choice."

It was impractical to define these terms in advance to their use in Chapter Two. Instead, explaining these terms in context with other documented understandings of political behaviors provides a richer understanding, thus they are addressed within the review of relevant political psychology literature. For ease of reference, however, many of these definitions are also compiled and located in Appendix 1.

Organization of supporting literature

In Chapter Two, I will present statistics about voting turnout and voter registration and understandings of political participation and nonparticipation. The reasons within the literature for varying degrees of participation are distilled into four categories. Social location refers to characteristics such as social class, educational obtainment, occupation, age, race, and gender, are presented within political participation theories as reliable predictors in identifying political participants. In the United States, political knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, creating structural barriers to participation for some populations (Conway, 2000; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). One complication in relying on social location to explain political behavior is that despite aggregate increases in social location, an expected increase in political participation has not been realized.

Psychological explanations for voting and nonvoting promote understanding political cultural influences, political efficaciousness, political socialization, and generational differences, noting how each indicates political activity. Access to resources, psychological engagement, the effects of age and voting registration regulations, and the effects of political recruitment networks are also seen as predicative, and are offered as structural barriers to

participation. Finally, some political participation is attributed to complex computations that are wittingly or unwittingly made by citizens, who complete a rational choice analysis, whereby the cost of participating is contrasted with the worth the anticipated benefits available from participating. These four themes – social location, psychological explanations, structural barriers, rational choice analysis – address political participation or nonparticipation, and are reviewed in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Three, I explore constructivism and some characteristics of qualitative study. The study employs individual interviews to develop case studies, in which students who are already developing their own political activism meet with me in my role as the researcher. I invited these students to participate because of their political activity. They have made a choice, have been socialized, or have adopted a psychological appreciation for participating, or have overcome, through effort or privilege, the structural barriers that prevent others in their cohort from political participation. Through observation and interviews of participants, re-presentations of the meaning the participants attribute to their study of political science, their own political action, and in particular their understanding of voting and its representation of their political interest were co-constructed (Manning, 1999a; Hatch, 2002).

Organization of research findings.

Chapters Four and Five are presentations of these understandings and meanings each participant attributed to political activity. All ten students are described in Chapter Four, the chapter being divided into three parts to represent clusters of students in accordance to the nexus of their political interests. These clusters consist of two students who focus on international politics; three participants who categorically put little emphasis

on the political system; and four students who favor domestic agendas initiatives over international concerns, and in particular focused their comments on civil rights issues.

Following the profiles of each participating student in Chapter Four is the topically indexed Chapter Five. There were topics that were of interest to a number of the participants. Each topic is portrayed using the students' words to describe the concepts and issues, an approach called thick description.

Finally, Chapter Six summarizes the study findings. It synthesizes the findings of the study according to the emergent framework, that of political awareness, political influence, and relevant issues. The chapter concludes with implications for student affairs practice and for future research.

Chapter Two

Civic Engagement, Voting, and Explanations for Political Participation

Understanding the reasons citizens participate in government, and the manner of that participation, has been an academic and popular concern for several decades (e.g., Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Doppelt & Shearer, 1999; Easton & Hess, 1961; Hyman, 1959/1969; Lane, 1959; Loeb, 1994, 1999; McDonald & Popkin, 2001; Milbrath, 1965; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Miller & Levitin, 1976; Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976; Patterson, 2002; Piven & Cloward, 1987, 2000; Renshon, 1974, 1977; Verba & Nie, 1992). When clustered for statistical reasons into age-cohorts, contrasting generations vote at differing rates; among these 18 – 24 year olds vote the least often (e.g., Plutzer, 2002; USCB, 2002b). Andolina (2002) quipped that each election cycle, a "traditional storyline – the apathetic, uninterested cohort ... 'too lazy' to vote" is unveiled in the media (p. 86).

In a recent study completed at Harvard, the authors introduced the study by noting "in 1972, 50% of eligible voters aged 18 – 24 cast a ballot in the Presidential election.... By 1996, the number of young people voting for President was down to 32%" (Institute of Politics [IOP], Harvard University, 2000, p. 3). This study is designed to understand the experiences of traditional-aged college students who have cultivated an interest in civil politics.

This chapter will support the study by recognizing how people, particularly college students, demonstrate political activity; and document a number of understandings generated within the academy to explain political participation. Understanding the influences that

promote political awareness and foster political participation is an important goal of the chapter. The first aspect of this chapter is a description of recent studies and some statistics that demonstrate both general population and adult youth declines in voter participation in the United States. The studies described sought motivators for college students to participate politically and suggested some differences between formal and informal political participation. Secondly, thoughts about appropriate roles for citizen participation in a democratic society are noted. These thoughts illustrate how citizens might define the issues relevant to politics and public policy. Finally, reasons for political participation or nonparticipation, using Rosenstone and Hansen's (1993) and Piven and Cloward's (2000) suggestions, are categorized, their respective categorical schemes supported by other scholarly works (e.g., Campbell, 1979; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Hyman, 1959/1969; Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Lane, 1959; Lazersfeld, Berelson, & Gandet, 1968; Mannheim, 1952c; McDonald & Popkin, 2001; Milbrath, 1965; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Mitchell, 1969; Procter, 1991; Putnam; 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000; Renshon, 1977; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Schattschneider, 1990/1960; Verba & Nie, 1992; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Weale, 1983).

Political Participation in the U.S.

Astin (1999) denounced the assumption that democracy "only amounts to going into a voting booth every now and then to make our choices in secret" (p. 32) in error. His criticism is well grounded; however, such is the condition of political participation studies, which heavily are focused on elections. Even as defined by the National Election Studies (NES, 2002), nonvoting "participation" is heavily weighted toward electoral political behaviors. Their four categories for participation describe citizens who have tried to influence how others voted, contributed money to a party or candidate, attended a political

meeting or rally, or worked for a party of candidate. There is no ignoring that voting is "by far the most common form of citizen participation in American politics" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, p. 41), and one result of this emphasis is that political science literature understands political participation through voting behaviors, through electoral politics, wholly at the expense of non-electoral politics. In a collection of profiles of citizens identified in a national telephone survey as "nonvoters," Doppelt and Shearer (1999) created five categories of voluntary nonvoters in the 1996 Presidential election: Doers, those who had voted in the past or who share characteristics that would cause these citizens to be identified as "likely voters;" Unplugged citizens who do not follow political news; the Don't Knows who self-impose barriers to prevent receiving political stimuli; and, the Irritables and Alienated, who dislike politics or lack political efficacy to such an extent they do not participate.

While more difficult to gather and having spurious application to voting statistics, there are other characteristics of democratic participation. NES (2002) accumulates data documenting citizen attention to political stimuli, including stimuli that do not necessarily result in orthodox or electoral political participation. From 1952 to 2000, NES documented a 25% decrease in newspaper readership, a 32% drop in listening to radio coverage of elections and campaigns, and an 8% decrease in reading magazine articles related to political campaigns. As might be expected as a result of the changing role of television in our society, respondents claiming to have watched part of a political campaign on TV has increased by a 25%. However, respondents claiming a general interest in public affairs has remained nearly static from 1960-2000, and citizens apparently care slightly more who wins the Presidential election (a nine percent change toward "care" from 1952-2000) and care slightly less who

wins their local Congressional election (a four percent change away from "care" from 1970-2000).

College Students Gravitate Toward Non-Electoral Political Participation

Four recent studies collected, processed, and interpreted multi-regional data about college students' attitudes toward politics and the U.S. political system. In the first of these, students conducted 800 telephone interviews (IOP Harvard, 2000) and found that among college students, community volunteerism is high but traditional political involvement is low. College students are disillusioned about and disconnected from the political system and are seeking new ways to solve local and national problems. They further suggested measures such as making politics more transparent, demystifying the registering and voting process, offering students more direct contact with candidates and public office holders, and applications of technology such as enabling citizens to vote via the Internet could motivate college students to wider political participation.

Second, the Higher Education Research Institute, centered at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), long has conducted nationwide surveys of first year students. Since the survey's inception in 1966, more than nine million students at more than 1,500 institutions have participated (HERI, 2002). They uncovered a present-day "renewed political interest and activism that has followed long-term declines in students' attention to politics" (section 2, ¶ 1), demonstrated in part with an increase in the percentage of students reporting that they frequently discussed politics and keep up to date with political events. A lead researcher further identified a growth, from 2000 to 2002, from 28.1% to 32.9%, of first year students who note "keeping up to date with political affairs" is "very important" or "essential" (Sax, 2003, p. 17).

Third, the Tarrance Group and the Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning and Engagements, on behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts, discovered that like "the cohorts that have immediately preceded them, young adults today perceive distance between government, politics, politicians and themselves" (Tarrance Group, 2002, p. 3). They noted, "overall, young adults have ambivalent views of the political realm" (p. 6). Significantly, "efficacy and [political] engagement are mutually reinforcing" (p. 9) with high correlations between levels of efficacy and involvement in civic and political life. Rather than traditional political activity, "young adults see local community involvement as the most important focus for volunteer activities" (p. 10).

Finally, Blackhurst and Foster (2003) took advantage of the presidential election cycles of 1996 and 2000 to collect, consolidate, and contrast data regarding college students' attitudes toward politics. They recognized the same generational influences noted here, as well as reflected on this belief that college students are more politically aware than their age-cohort-members that do not attend college. An impressive finding from their work disputes a common belief, a belief reflected in the quote attributed to former President Clinton in the "statement of problem" in Chapter One. Blackhurst and Foster dispute the notion that students reject civic activity because of cynicism toward things political. More integral to divining political awareness, they assert, were survey items they clustered and labeled – unfortunately – as "apathy" toward political activity. The items that they found as more important to the development of political interest are congruent with the rational choice argument located below.

College students and service learning.

Within the limited literature about political activity among contemporary college students, two primary veins are addressed: service learning (e.g., Claus, 1999; DiVitis, Johns,

& Simpson, 1998; Fields & Feinberg, 2001; Handley, 2001; Jones, 2002; Margolis, 1982; Mendel-Reyes, 1998; Myers-Lipton, 1996; Rhoads, 1997b, 1998b) and political demonstration (e.g., Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Buhle, 1989; Claus & Ogden, 1999a, 1999b; Cohen, 1989; Curtin, 2002; David, 2003; Hamrick, 1998; Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Mangan, 2003; Rhoads, 1997a, 1998a; Young, 2003).

Service learning has long been a part of the American college and university landscape (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Flikkema, 1998), legitimized through efforts such as Dewey's, who advocated for pedagogies that departed from the "great books" tradition (Ehrlich, 1996). Several learning outcomes are attributed to service learning, notably gains in interpersonal, intrapersonal, and practical competencies (Whitt & Miller, 1999). Service learning teaches "small 'd'" (Parson, 1999, p. 136) democracy skills, which differ from other school-environment opportunities that either mimic or develop democratic institutions.

One aspect of Parson's (1999) argument relied on an observation of numbers. Student government membership is restricted to too few students to be used to teach participative democracy. Thus, service-learning activities, which are open to countless participants, may provide broader access to democratic educational opportunities.

Differing conclusions as to the effectiveness of service-learning abound. Blackhurst and Foster (2003) ask appropriate questions about their observations that students involved in service activities are found to have higher political commitment. They suggest that rather than service-learning being a catalyst for political activity, "it may be that the same students who are inclined to participate in community service are also inclined to participate in the political process" (p. 169).

Some question whether service-learning experiences alone are sufficient to promote learning, or whether the physical work requires complementary, attendant coursework. Without such coursework, suggested Claus and Ogden (1999a), service learning becomes a "superficial or 'feel good' addition to the regular offerings of schools" (pp. 1-2). Their argument concluded that the sponsoring colleges or universities, rather than either the students engaged in the service learning or the intended recipients of the service projects, benefit most from service learning activities. Institutional public affairs materials commonly promote service-learning projects as a publicly visible community benefit provided by the college or university (Zlotkowski, 1999).

The tradition of community service has an awkward relationship with the university, due to the lack of "clearly articulated and evaluated learning objectives" (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999, p. 10). Other characteristics of service-learning that might be in conflict with educational objectives include the absence of formal recording methods, those coordinating service-learning being located outside of the flow of university resources (such as faculty expertise, library resources, and technology), and that the efforts of students "are not always coordinated with the instructional mission" (ibid, p. 10). The development of service learning has provided acceptance, resource allocation, and centrality to mission for the efforts of those interested in community service.

Advocates for service learning articulate that community service, without formalizing the experiences, still provides adequate exposure to contribute to the students' learning. Guarasci and Mapstone (1998) advocated for connecting coursework and community service; introducing traditional scholarship, they argued, helps clarify the students' appreciation of citizenship. Participation in service-learning helps to reverse, they argue, "the racial and ethnic divide...the emerging postmodern American apartheid...that now

characterizes modern life" (p. 47). Tactile learning experiences are powerful because they teach students to work as change agents (Astin & Sax, 1998; Claus, 1999; Claus & Ogden, 1999a, 1999b; Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Olson, 1999; Rhoads, 1997b, 1998b), often in places where the students are away from familiar environments (DeVitis, Johns, & Simpson, 1998), thus promoting "seamless learning environments which do not divide students' experiences with labels such as 'academic' and 'non-academic' or 'in-class' and 'out-of-class'" (Andreas & Schuh, 1999, p. 8). The learning is realized though the contemplation by those performing the service – the service-learners. In theory, they reflect on the privilege they enjoy which enables them to serve. Interestingly, Whitt and Miller (1999) remind us that the experiences of service learning can be associated with negative outcomes, while Jones (2002) and Ogden (1999) cautioned against the ubiquitous institutionalization of service learning as pedagogy, fearing that doing so would make the focus on service rather than learning.

College students and political demonstrations.

College students in both the U.S. and abroad have long participated in demonstrations, sometimes over personal reasons and sometimes for public policy concerns (Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Boren, 2001; Cohen, 1989). Walker and Weinberg (1972) defined three categories of studies of activism. The first approach compares activists and nonactivists; the second explains student political action as a subset of a more widespread, popular movement; and the third explanation is dependent upon generational cohort theories.

Colonial period students protested the quality of their meals (Boren, 2001; Rudolph, 1962/1999), and other measures of quality of life have proved reason enough for protest over the last two centuries (Rhoads, 1998a). In the 20th Century, students have demonstrated in favor or against the socialist movement, the advancement of civil rights, or

to protest socially unjust activities, including U.S. participation in war or international incursions (Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Beeler, 1985; Boren, 2001; Buhle, 1989; Cohen, 1989; Foley, 2001; Hamrick, 1998; Rhoads, 1997a, 1998a; Rodriquez, 2001). In the 1930s, students who held "nonconservative" political beliefs were recognized by their peers as those students with "privilege or status in the community" (in Feldman, 1972, p. 330).

There is, of course, an exhaustive literature regarding campus activism in the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Boren, 2001; Buhle, 1989; delli Carpini, 1986; David, 2003; Gitlin, 1987; Green & Astin, 1985; Hart, 1978; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Kinder & Sears, 1985; Klatch, 1999; Miser, 1988; Morse, 1989; Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976). Interestingly and at conflict with modern lore, the activism on campuses in the 1960s and early 1970s covered the ideological spectrum of national politics, from conservative to progressive (Block, Haan, & Smith, 1972; Klatch, 1999). Examples of campus-based 1980s activism tended toward progressive politics, including advocating for divestment from apartheid-riddled South Africa, protesting U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, and focusing attention on the domestic epidemics of AIDS and homelessness (Altbach & Cohen, 1989; Beeler, 1985; Rhoads, 1998a).

Activism on U.S. college campuses appears to be increasing, a mark of the "'New,' New Left" (Rhoads, 1998a, p. 12), reversing a lull, an "apathy that so characterized much of the 1970s and 1980s" (p. 12; also see HERI, 2002; Sax, 2003). Referring to U.S. campus activism in the 1960s, Frederick Obear (in Rhoads, 1998a) identified three themes: race relations and the Civil Rights Movement; anti-war/peace movement; and educational reform, a.k.a., the Free Speech Movement. Notwithstanding modern demonstrations over quality-of-life issues, including a series of "riots" to protest stricter laws and enforcement of laws surrounding alcohol use (National Drug Strategy Network, 1998), modern

demonstrations adhere to the categories presented by Obear. Examples of these include protests over the elimination of affirmative action programs or funding for Native American scholarships (Rhoads, 1997a, 1998a), or to draw attention to derogatory comments made about the academic abilities of students of color (Rhoads, 1998a; Foley, 2001); anti-war/peace demonstrations (Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Beeler, 1985; Buhle, 1989; Curtin, 2002; Mangan, 2003; Marklein, 2003; Rodriquez, 2001; Young, 2003); supporting the inclusion of ethnic studies (Rhoads, 1998a); or the continuation of institutional character (e.g., advocating for the preservation of the all-women's status at Mills College [Rhoads, 1997a, 1998a] or for the continuation of programs that improve the educational environment, such as affirmative action [Bartlett & Rooney, 2003]).

Election turnout.

Great interest and investigation is applied to understanding elections, for elections have a normative value within a democracy (Berelson, Lazersfeld, & McPhee, 1954; Katz, 1997). Both Figure 1 and Table 1 demonstrate voting numbers and trends for the total U.S. population and the 18 – 24 year old age group for selected elections. Voting is "habitual," concluded Rosenstone and Hansen (1993, p. 53). They point to NES statistics that 81% and 84% (circa 1956/1960, & 1972/1976) of voters in either presidential election voted in both elections, further noting the lack of evidence suggesting any change in the habitual voting trend. One interpretation of this trend, as it is identified, supports the assertion that, like voting, non-voting is also "habitual."

Schattschneider (1990/1960) sounded the alarm, noting that low levels of citizen participation originates with despair about the possibility and is a sign of a diseased, not healthy polity, while Lijphart (1997) called low voter turnout a "serious democratic problem," as low turnout equals "systemically biased" (p. 1) unequal representation.

Table 1. Election Turnout, Self-Reported [a], General U.S. Elections, 1996-2000.

	November 1972	November 1974 [c]	November 1996	November 1998 [c]	November 2000
Total Voted, US Total	85¾ million	63 million	105 million	83 million	111 million [b]
Percent Registered to Vote, US Total	72.3%	62.2%	54.2%	41.9%	55%
Percentage Voted, US Total	63.0%	44.7%	43.4%	39.2%	50.7%
Reported Voted, 18-24 years of age	12.2 million	6.1 million	7.8 million	4¼ million	8.6 million
Percent Registered to Vote, 18-24 years of age	58.9%	41.3%	65.9%	62.1%	69.5%
Percentage Voted, 18-24 years of age	49.6%	23.8%	32.4%	32.4%	36.1%

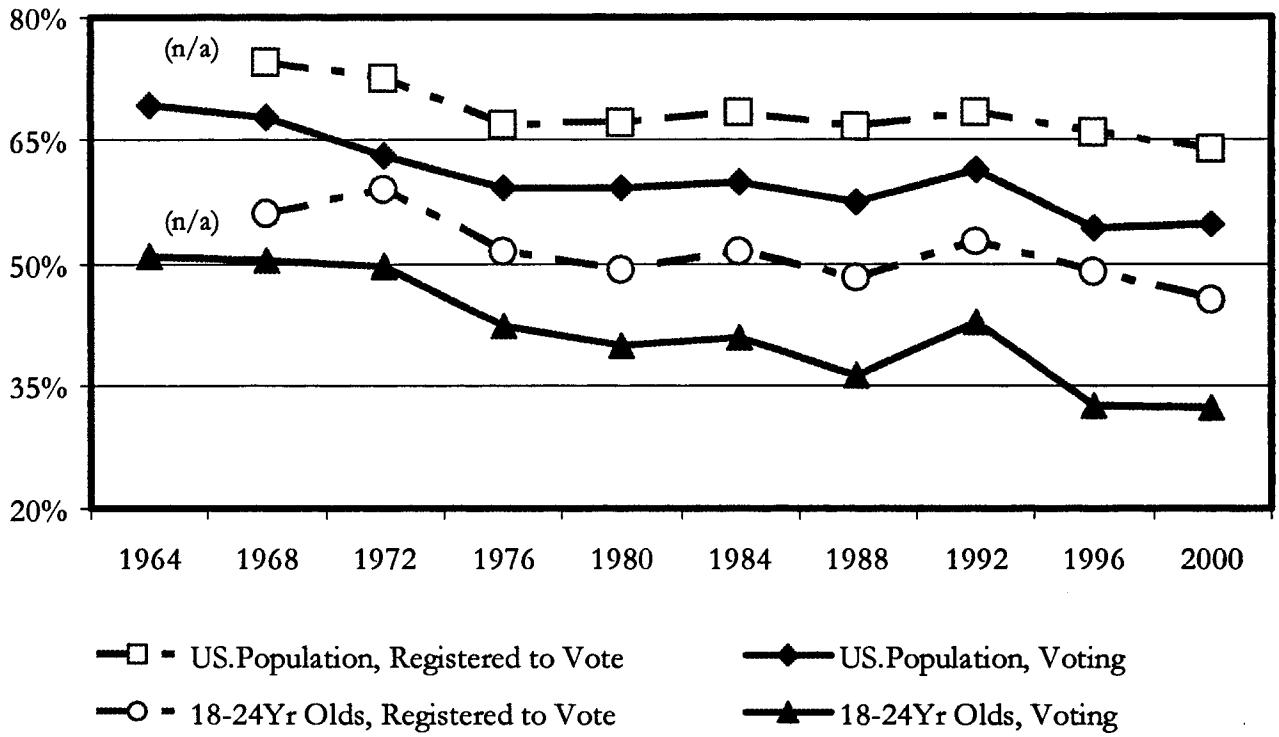
Source: United States Bureau of the Census (1973, 1976, 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c).

[a] Bureau statistics are useful for indicating trends of the entire population and for the under-25 population, however, it is worth noting that critics cite imperfections in Census Bureau numbers. Conway (2000) reported that USCB collects data through self-reporting of a sample population, and the results are extrapolated as representative of the entire electorate. She reflected, "the Bureau...estimates that, because interviewees overreport the frequency of voting, turnout [estimates are] 5 to 12 percent higher than the true number of ballots cast and recorded" (p. 5).

[b] See comment [a]. For example, Ceasar and Busch (2001) reported 105 million ballots were cast in the 2000 presidential election, a difference of six million from those who reported they voted.

[c] The turnout in midterm elections, that is, the election cycle in the middle of the President's term in which several states offices, one-third of U.S. Senate seats, and all U.S. House of Representative seats, always lags behind presidential-election year turnout (Jackson, 2000; Key, 1964). Jackson cites partisan politics, particularly in states dominated by one political party, as a rationale for state-specific races having greater importance in mid-term years. The leadership takes advantage of a more "reliable" voter turnout. Cooper (2002) noted that 36 governors' races occurred during the 2002 midterm election.

Figure 1. Voting Registration and Turnout in Presidential Elections, U.S., by whole population and 18 – 24 year olds.



Note: Census data before 1972 are for 21-24 year olds; after 1972 are for 18-24 year olds. The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1971), ratified in time for the 1972 presidential election, changed the national voting age from 21 to 18. There were some states that had suffrage ages less that 21 years of age prior to 1972.

Elections define a democratic nation, argued LeDuc, Niemi, and Norris (1996), because "elections are the one political institution that both leads and reflects many of the social, political, and economic trends of that society" (p. 4). There is a substantial literature about the trend of low participation and suggested reasons for decreased voter participation (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Burnham, 1987; Crotty, 1991; Doppelt & Shearer, 1999; Miller & Levitin, 1976; Nie, Verba, & Petrocik, 1976; Patterson, 2002; Piven & Cloward, 1987, 2000).

College students and other adult youth.

For college students and their advocates, youth voting statistics present a good news/bad news proposition. Within their age group, college students disproportionately do vote. College students are one-and-one-half times as likely to vote than others in their cohorts who have no college experience (Tarrance Group, 2000). Preliminary numbers from the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate indicate that in the 2000 election, "slightly more college students may have made it to the polls, but this advantage appears to be counterbalanced by a slight decline in voting among non-college students" (Andolina, 2002, p. 98). College students register to vote more consistently; "college graduates (89%) and those with some college education (79%) are more likely to being registered than those with only a high school education or less (57%)" (Tarrance Group, 2000, ¶ 6). McDonald and Associates (2002) hypothesized that, because of the number of students who vote in their hometown districts, sometimes by absentee ballots, voting rates of college students are underreported.

Recently, Plutzer (2002) addressed young adults' voting patterns and compiled explanations of the phenomenon of youth undervoting. Reflecting upon Rosenstone and

Hansen's (1993) "voter turnout is ...habitual" (p. 53) assertion, Plutzer applied the structural barriers and psychological explanations to understand poor electoral participation by youth in the last three decades. While it was an embellishment to call his accumulated explanations a "model," he synthesized the several political and social theories about why people participate, or more to the point, do not participate during youth. His contribution to political science is the acknowledgement that multiple models – rather than any one single model in isolation – better explains the complexity of an individual's social activity. He used available data to advance a life-cycle model of political activity, and suggested that while education or privilege might advance the first event of voting, it is their first act that sets in motion the inertia of political participation. His analysis asserted that it is most difficult for a voter to vote the first time, but that voting once establishes an inertia to vote again in the future.

Some popular news publishers, such as Time, Newsweek, the New York Times, and the Washington Post recently have printed articles about the declining popular political participation. Sociologists, journalists, and political scientists have authored books or chapters on the same topic (e.g., Andolina, 2002; Doppelt & Shearer, 1999; Loeb, 1994, 1999; Patterson, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1998, 2000). Among the variety of media informing citizens about low youth vote is television. While not really being scholarship, one dramatized quote is both compelling and accurate (see USCB, 2002a). C.J. Cregg, the fictional press secretary in the fictional White House on NBC's popular television show The West Wing (Sorkin, et al., 2002), was speaking at a "get out the vote" rally where she announced:

> twenty-five years ago, half of all 18 – 24 year olds voted; today it's 25%. Eighteen to twenty-four year olds represent 33% of the population but only

> account for 7% of the voters. Think government isn't about you? How many of you have student loans to pay? How many have credit card debt? How many of you want clean air and clean water and civil liberties? How many want jobs? How many want kids? How many want their kids to go to good school and walk on safe streets? Decisions are made by those who show up. You've got to rock the vote!

Low voter turnout among youth long has been a concern. While not as moribund as Rousseau (~1762/n.d.), who wrote "the body politic, as well as the human body, begins to die as soon as it is born, and carries in itself the causes of its destruction" (Book III, Chapter 11, ¶ 3), Abramson and Aldrich (1982) and Mayer (1992) both demonstrate the math: one-sixth of the electorate changes each presidential election. The effects of generational replacement (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Mayer, 1992; Patterson, 2002), that is the phenomenon of young people reach the age of franchise while other generations, particularly the elderly, leave the voting pool, spawns an urgency among political activists to motivate youth to participate and preserve voter turnout.

In trying to identify young voters' motivations to vote, a local study in Austin, Texas (Chaney, Scott, Ritter, & Tomich, 2001) provided corroboration to the four nationally-conducted studies noted above (IOP Harvard, 2000; HERI, 2002; Tarrance Group, 2002; Blackhurst & Foster, 2003). Chaney, et al., circulated questionnaires and received 46 returns from citizens aged 18 to 24 from a single metro area, targeting a cross-section of university-, community college-, and non-students. Data from both voters and non-voters in the 2000 elections were sought and thus included among the responses. The elements of the instrument are reduced to two categories, influence of family or friends on the young voter/non-voter, and feelings generated by the young voter/non-voter about the media

image of the Millennial Generation as being disinterested in political participation. Both voters and non-voters expressed that little of their political interest was a result of political socialization. Voters more than non-voters rebuffed the label assigned to the Millennials as disinterested in politics, or worse, lazy.

Although the rates of voting by college students outpace those of their high-school-graduate colleagues, college students report that community volunteerism is preferred over political engagement (Davis-Packard, 2000; Harvard IOP, 2000) and that political participation is rejected as an avenue to social change (Davis-Packard, 2000; Hart Associates, 2001). Sax (2003) noted that for entering college students, social activism and volunteering has risen steadily for more than a decade. Public education is and important aspect of our society and culture, for it fulfills the constitutional goals of the common good (Campbell, 1996) and addresses Thomas Jefferson's assertion that the necessary skills for citizen participation in government were – are – a responsibility of government through public education (Morse, 1989). A chasm is evident, though, between those who attend higher education and those who do not. Tarrance Group (2000, 2002) numbers demonstrate that college students disproportionately vote among their peers. "American colleges," Morse posited, have long "considered 'responsible citizenship' part of their mission" (p. iv). Noting that college students' rates of formal participation exceed the participation rates of their non-college attending peers does not mitigate, however, that 18 – 24 year olds remain the age group with the lowest participation rates, and those participation rates are declining.

Democracy

Democracy is a powerful word and represents a powerful, multifaceted concept. Political philosophers have amassed a spectrum of democratic models that balance the respective authority allocated to citizens or their leaders. Although the late 20th Century has

seen an explosion in democracies and democratic notions (Gurr, 2000; Warren, 2002), one could credibly suggest that no democracies existed as late as 1900. A dominant historical theme since then has been the formation of republics and emerging pockets of continually expanding suffrage in the United States and some European nations. Notably, "today, 119 of the 192 existing countries count as democracies, encompassing 58.2% of the world's population" (Warren, 2002, p. 677). Much of this section is dedicated to highlighting points on a spectrum of different understandings of citizen participation.

"Perhaps no other individual influenced the author of the Declaration of Independence more than John Locke," wrote Anthony (2002). Two Lockean concepts are familiar to citizens acculturated in the United States (Brown, 2001). Locke asserted that government has the responsibility to protect citizens' life, liberty, and property, and that political authority derives from the consent of the governed. Locke advocated that citizens are and remain sovereign – that their rights should only be abridged to protect the rights of fellow citizens, and that communities are formed as a collection of autonomous and independent individuals (Brown, 2001; Locke, 1690/1980; Hauser, n.d.).

The beautifully crafted Anthem (Rand, 1943) is but one example of the relevant and ancient debate over the balance of community and individual rights; former President Jimmy Carter utilized the same theme in his speech to accept the Nobel Peace Prize (2002). These two competing values of community and individualism are primary in any consideration for public policy decisions. Advocates of a community orientation heap "considerable criticism of the preoccupation with [individual] rights" (Brinkley, 1996, ¶ 3). Public policy requires a prioritization of the allocation of resources to one of three different formulas. Should resources to be (1) commonly shared in approximately equally amounts; (2) redistributed according to need in an effort to alleviate problems created by past, discriminatory decisions;

or (3) allocated to support and promulgate privilege in the community, thus directing resources to those best positioned to advocate for the receipt of those resources (Fields & Feinberg, 2001; Medearis, 1987)?

U.S. history is riddled with race and its implications. Importantly, race affects our understanding of community and individual rights. Campbell (1996) argued against inequality in public education, demonstrating privilege in education as a function of race and ethnicity, class, and sex. Such inequities, he argued, undermine a common understanding of democracy, a keystone of public education. Loeb (1994) found that identification with individual rights is a factor in white U.S. acculturation, while students of color are much more likely to identify with their community of origin. Belliotti (2000) explored family and community influences on individual behavior within an ethnic setting. He showed that individuals are linked to a variety of often conflicting groups – family, friends, neighborhood, country, international alliances, and ethnic, gender, and racial unions. For college or university administrators, one example of the struggle over which to prioritize, community or individual rights, is evident in the "hate speech" codes advanced in the 1990s in response to "escalating racial, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and sexist incidents" (Kaplin & Lee, 1995, pp. 508-509). Loeb (1994) noted that these codes "contain profound traps" (p. 359). In an effort to safeguard members of the academic community, universities and colleges could potentially violate the First Amendment right to free speech, an individual right (Kaplin & Lee, 1995).

Allocation of decision-making in democracies.

Dahl (1963) poignantly echoed a question asked by "foreign observers from Tocqueville and Bryce to Myrdal and Brogan.... In a political system where nearly every adult may vote but where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other

resources are unequally disturbed, who actually governs" (p. 1)? The range of options for democratic-republican forms of government can be described more simply or with great detail. Eyler and Giles (1999), who wrote in a student affairs or generalist educator voice, posited "one's view of democracy [can be] a Jeffersonian direct participation model or a more representative republican democracy" (p. 152). Deeper analyses are found, not surprisingly, from political science. Renshon (1974) proposed that political theory and political participation bridge "how much and what kind of citizen participation is desirable; [and] what in fact is the nature and extent of much citizen participation in any given political system" (p. 13). The question of the policies of decision making the government should follow can be placed on a continuous scale, with endpoints labeled as "one person makes decisions for all" to "all decisions reached unanimously" (Wade & Curry, 1970, p 40). Although Schattschneider (1990/1960) questioned the applicability of philosophies scribed 2400 years ago, in what would contemporarily be considered small cities, orthodox political theory highly regards these ancient observations. Plato (~360 B.C./1921) and Aristotle (– /1999) warned against the hazards of democratic government. More recently, Machiavelli (1513/1952) advised "elites" (of both states and Church) must and often do resort to "evil" acts to protect their power, order, stability, and the public good. The question of democratic representation – available systems, the characteristics of the society, and the degree to which citizens participate – has long been important to the formation of government (Renshon, 1974).

The balance of roles of citizen participation and efficient allocation of responsibility for decision-making is different under several models. These models speculate how "democratic" governments might function best, with each type of participation having various characteristics to provide or detract benefits and deficiencies. Kelso (1978), Weale

(1983), and Judis (2000) have provided points on a continuum, taxonomies of the varying degrees of citizen participation within democratically-styled governments. They provide insight into the role of citizens and legislators have, and the degree to which citizens want representation rather than individual responsibility for participation, and the differing governmental structures suggest different amounts of individual citizens' participation. Numerous types of participatory governments differently promote citizen participation. Participatory democracy is harder than representative democracy because of the retained power and therefore responsibility of the citizen to stay informed and involved (Mendel-Reyes, 1998). Carter (1989) described "different theoretical standpoints which stress differing values and imply varying degrees of [citizen] activity and control...elitist democracy, liberal democracy as interpreted by John Stuart Mill, pluralist Tocquevillian democracy, and Rousseauist participatory democracy" (p. 285). These types are similar and each citizen decides what role to play within the defined opportunities for participation.

Who Participates?

Even in governmental system where everyone could contribute, not everyone will choose to do so (Dahl, 1963; Milbrath, 1965; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Uhlaner, 1989). Resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks serve as three possible explanations for who is involved (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995), and two important models help us understand political participation and political interaction. In the first, Milbrath (1965) borrowed titles from the Roman Empire as he named his levels of political participation. He described the apathetics, or persons who are withdrawn from the political process; spectators, who are minimally involved in politics; and the active combatants in the political process, the gladiators. In a Roman gladiatorial contest, a small band of gladiators would compete to please the spectators, who in turn clap, cheer, and finally vote to decide

who has won the battle (which then equates, in Milbrath's model, to elections). Creating a different type of model, Dahl (1963) described two strata, the political and the apolitical. Within the political strata is a subset of power seekers, which in turn contains a subset of leaders.

Milbrath (1965) and Milbrath and Goel (1977) suggested specific acts that would indicate political participation. Many included items are activities measured by NES, such as voting, wearing a campaign button or putting a bumper sticker on one's car, making a monetary contribution, or attending a political meeting. Milbrath and Goel (1977) wrote that investigating these actions has value for "individual (micro) political behavior affects [sic] the behavior of the larger political systems (macro); macro characteristics, in turn, affect [sic] micro behaviors" (p. 5).

Why Do People Participate?

The primary context of this study examines the distinctiveness and the interconnection between the awareness each participant, as a citizen, has of their government, and the influences that are exacted upon them. This interplay dictates how the students involved in the study interpret the issues that they recognize in the complex world around them.

A separate organizational scheme was chosen to present the tenets of political psychology. The notions of awareness and influence should be considered integral parts of each psychological effect. Rosenstone and Hanson (1993) suggested that "one way to think about this puzzle is to invert this question...ask why people don't take part in politics. Three assumptions immediately suggest themselves: because they can't, because they don't want to, or because nobody asked" (p. 271). Interestingly, they added a fourth assumption, a variation of the fourth, in their endnotes: because "they aren't allowed to participate" (p. 290).

Doppelt and Shearer (1999) recognized this group as a sixth category of nonvoters, those who are denied the franchise, whom they call the "Can't Shows." Data aggregated and demonstrated by Rosenstone and Hanson coalesced into categories that correspond with and are supported by previous work in the area of citizen participation. It is convenient to borrow a classification of four phenomena emphasized by Rosenstone and Hanson's assumption. These address both whether people choose to participate in politics, and if they participate, how they arrive at their decisions of whom or what to advocate, endorse, or select. Their scheme provided clarity and informed my decision to create the four categories: the effect of social location, psychological explanations for participation, structural barriers to participation, and rational choice theory. These four themes, with subcategories, are discussed below.

Social Location

Lazersfeld, Berelson, and Gandet (1968) included social class in their Index of Political Predispositions. Explaining this Index, Lazersfeld and his colleagues wrote that "a person thinks, politically, as he [sic] is, socially. Social characteristics determine political preferences" (p. 27). They regressed characteristics of voters, and identified social connections, specifically an individual's religion, social class, race, educational obtainment, national region, and age, as important to the political awareness a citizen develops.

Twenty-four years later, Tiexeira (1992) likewise identified social characteristics, although he presented his findings in a different order. It is unclear if his reordering of characteristics is statistically reflective or only stylistic. He found that the social connections of educational obtainment, occupation, class, age, race, and gender are instructive in determining whether a citizen is likely to vote.

Campbell (1979) pointed out that in the U.S. social class differences are historically significant. Socioeconomic status and level of education consistently correlate with political participation. Croteau (1995) suggested that for most middle class citizens, political participation is a distraction from their lives, but that political "nonparticipation is more prevalent amongst those with lower socioeconomic status" (p. xiv). Wealth, wrote Campbell (1979), dictated "who was allowed to vote; political parties throughout our history separate roughly on a line between 'haves' and 'have nots'" (p. 221). Conway (2000) described the relationship between socioeconomic status and voter perceptions, since socioeconomic status help[s] to determine the social roles people play [and] explains why some individuals receive more political stimulation that others" (pp. 17-18). While some receive greater political stimulation, some are simply more able to afford the demands of political participation. Wealth, education, and political experience all enable participation, and increased participation atop these other elements of privilege enforce and foster greater political efficacy (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). However, current trends provide confusing data. Voting participation is trending downward while more citizens are seeking higher levels of education.

Social location is an element of this research project, as college attendance historically correlates with greater citizen participation. Other issues, such as income, sex or gender, or race, are demonstrated to influence political participation. Poverty creates psychology, a set of feelings that a person lacks control over governmental and personal situations (Croteau, 1995; Kelso, 1978). This psychology affects those with "limited resources, instability, and insecurity, limited education, and relative powerlessness in the workplace" (Croteau, 1995, p. xiv), decreasing the political efficacy of these citizens. Theorists who have suggested social location as a predictor for political participation have

exercised some control of education, income levels, and race; however, the modal citizen they describe is in fact white, educated, and comfortable.

Psychological Explanations for Participation

Dawson and Prewitt (1969) identified three fields that have contributed to the development of political sociology: cultural anthropology, psychiatry, and sociology/social psychology. Cultural anthropology investigates the socialization, cultural transmission, and personal development that are often applicable to more specific political socialization questions. Psychiatry, in contrast, presents hypotheses about the socialization processes and personality development, while social psychology emphasizes how group standards are passed on to individual members. Political science has looked to these fields to reach an understanding of participation practices, although Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) have encouraged greater attention to the explanations of personal attributes of individual citizens and their effects on political involvement. Drawing from the reasons deduced in social political theories, the following section is organized to describe five psychological phenomena linked to political participation: political efficacy, social capital, political trust and socialization, and generational identity.

Political efficacy.

Political efficacy is a seminal concept in understanding political participation and voting behaviors. Bolstering political efficacy is a "prerequisite for widespread political participation" (Balch, 1974, p. 2), because citizens will not participate if they do not believe that their participation will matter or have any effect.

Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) defined political efficacy as a

> sense of the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worth while to

> perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bring about this change. (p. 187)

Because political efficacy is a personal "sense," it can be discussed and estimated, but not empirically measured (Balch, 1971, 1974). To understand political efficacy, Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) developed a series of perceptions citizens hold about their government, items that continue to be used to measure and understand an individual's political efficacy. The items have been so widely accepted that these items continue to be used; the items measured include:

- I don't think public officials care much about what people like me think.
- The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in this country.
- Voting is the only what that people like me can have any say about how the government runs things.
- People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
- Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. (pp. 187-188)

Political efficacy consists of internal and external dimensions, the distinction existing between whether a person believes in their individual ability to effect change or the responsiveness of the political system to accept citizen participation (Balch, 1971, 1974; Lane, 1959). Campbell's, et al. (1954) questions can be divided into those that address internal efficacy and questions measuring external efficacy (Craig, Niemi, & Silver, 1990; Balch, 1974). Balch's (1974) construct therefore determines whether the government can be externally affected and/or whether the participant believes they alone are capable of having

such an effect. From the externally efficaciousness, a sense of political trust can be demonstrated.

Campbell (1979) found an inverse relationship exists between an individuals' knowledge of political systems and their political trust. Conversely, he found a positive relationship exists between the knowledge of political systems and the political efficacy of adolescent individuals. Students learn more about democracy, and believe they can contribute, although the political trust an adult has decreases with the same education that inspires the adolescent. He suggested that we grow up, become less interested in politics or influencing policy, or believe less in our ability to do so. In effect, we are less efficacious.

Efficacy as a social issue.

Schattschneider (1990/1960) suggested that non-participation in politics occurs because neither the present scope of political organizations nor the political debate speaks to the needs of those non-participants. Pinkleton and Austin (2001) compiled research demonstrating a societal perception that both citizens' confidence in democratic institutional and voter turnout are in decline. Their research was based on identifying persons who are cynical of government, asserting a likelihood these people will have low political efficacy. This "disaffection from politics is emblematic of our disbelief that we can change things" (DeLuca, 1995, p. 201), and is particularly problematic if, indeed, efficacy, is "a norm which supports a democratic political regime" (Balch, 1974, p. 2). He continued, "one who has internalized this norm is presumable less likely to distrust the regime or to engage in regime-challenging acts" (Balch, 1974, p. 2, citing Easton & Dennis, 1967, Brown, 1972). The political disconnectedness of citizens, whose connectedness is an expected norm and a premise of democracy, is alarming. Competing, alternative views of the impact of direct democracy on voters' civic orientations suggest political efficacy either is fostered or

diminished, contingent upon citizens' belief in their own competence or the governmental openness to citizen-initiated change (Gilens, Glaser, & Mendelberg, 2001).

Several concepts intersect to explain political participation and political efficacy is a nexus of these concepts. The principles of social capital and sense of civic obligation contribute to political efficacy, which in turn contributes to the concepts of political culture and political utility (Renshon, 1974).

The concept of social capital.

Social capital, "the latest conceptual attempt to account for democracy's persistence, and when it occurs, its success" (Renshon, 2000, p. 199), has been revitalized as an academic concept by Burt (2000), Coleman (1990), and Putnam (1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000). Two broad types of definitions represent "social capital." The first type of definition "focuses primarily on social capital as a resource facilitation action by a focal actor....[the second] as a feature of the internal linkages that characterizes the structures of collective actors" (Adler & Kwon, 2000, pp. 90, 92). Burt and Coleman provide intricate explanations of the nature of organizations and social networking, and its impact on group efficiency and communication patterns, while Putnam focuses on the impact of a societal evolution toward familial self-isolation on our macro society. More simply, Conway's (2000) wrote that social capital

> refers to the aspects of social life that enable citizens to cooperate effectively to try to achieve shared objectives. These aspects include being a part of social networks, accepting social and political norms, and having trust in others and confidence in political leaders and in the operation of the political system. (p. 42, footnote)

The role of civic organization and American-style democracy is well–established and –posited (e.g., Hirst, 2002; Jeffres, Atkin, & Neuendorf, 2002; Skocpol, Ganz, Munson,

Camp, Swers, & Oser, 1999; Tocqueville, 1950/1864). Developing social capital is quite different that actual political participation, but it highly approximates the type of community-come-involvement promoted by student development practitioners; both express a reliance on shared objectives and norms, trust and reciprocity, and dispersed self-governance (see Carter, 1989; Roberts, 1993; Singer, 2002; Young, 1993). Important to the notion of social capital is a generalized reciprocity (Baker, 2000; Putnam, 1993, 1995b, 2000; Singer, 2002; Wuthnow, 1994), a reciprocity that is not grounding in quid-pro-quo-agreements, but rather assumes members of a social network will have and act upon a willingness to help others in the network and anticipate that aid will be reciprocated should a need arise. The promise of unforeseen assistance (e.g., learning about jobs, learning about candidates running for office, exchanging ideas at college, and so on) associated with social networks serves as the needed reward within the calculus of rewards and costs (Homans, 1961; La Jolla Institute, 1997; Scott, 2000).

Putnam (1995a, 1995b, 2000) posited that social capital is declining, presenting compelling evidence of that decline in the United States over the past generation. He used measures of participation in church-related groups, labor unions, PTAs, traditional women's clubs, fraternal organizations, and mainline civic organizations. Ladd (1998) challenged Putnam's assertion, and noted that "by all the basic measures – group membership, voluntarism, and philanthropy – civic engagement is as strong today as in times past" ("Social Confidence and Trust," ¶ 1). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) and Ladd (1998) hypothesized that the appearance of social capital is changing, but our connections are nonetheless intact. Interestingly, Putnam (2002) found that in the wake of September 11, 2001, the anthrax crisis, and the start of the Afghan war, "trust in government, trust in the police, and interest in politics are all up. Compared with a year ago, Americans are somewhat

more likely to have attended a political meeting or to have worked on a community project" (¶ 7). Reflecting on the reorientation of societal accolades that occurred during World War II, Bennis and Thomas (2002) hypothesized "one positive outcome of the September [11, 2001] tragedy will be a renaissance of political and public leaders setting the standard for future leadership, rather than our recent exclusive, almost obsessive, preoccupation with business leadership" (pp. 167-168).

Political trust.

Political trust is an outgrowth of social capital, but is also deeply rooted political efficacy, especially external efficacy. The phenomenon of political trust is greatly debated. Little consensus exists about what political trust means or what causes it (Devroye, 2001). Two general points about trust seem to pervade the literature (Barber, 1983; Hart, 1978; Hetherington, 1998). One line holds trust as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, while others view political trust a result of a match between expectations about political actors and institutions and their actual performance.

Theoretical considerations of political trust suggest that people have normative expectations about a range of policy outcomes (Easton, 1965; Stokes, 1962; Wright, 1976), the competency and morality of political actors (Barber, 1983; Hart, 1978; Wright, 1976), and about the operation of the political process (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1995). Trust will be higher or lower depending on the degree of correspondence between citizen expectations and perceived government performance (Craig, 1993). NES measures of political trust are complex and are founded on "questions [that are] partly ethical, [address] the ability and efficiency of government officials and the correctness of their policy decisions" (Stokes, 1962, p. 64). Hetherington (1998) determined that distrust in government has become stronger and more widespread during the last 30 years. Patterson (2002) described the 2000

election, in particularly the Florida calamity, as one further example of "public policies designed to deny or suppress the vote" (p. 144). Brady demonstrated that the "undervotes and overvotes are concentrated in areas with poor people, minorities, and older people ... concentrated [for example] in poor, black precincts" (Brady, 2002, p. 48). Such occurrences undermine minority confidence in their political standing – effecting individual efficacy and cultural political trust.

Political socialization.

The practice of political socialization instills behaviors, attitudes, values of self, and awareness of community and individuals' responsibilities in that community (Beck, 1974; Dennis, 1973; Easton & Hess, 1961; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Hayes & Bean, 1993; Hyman, 1959/1969; Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Lane, 1959; Procter, 1991; Renshon, 1977). Through this process, individuals learn the enduring attitudes surrounding political norms, values, and behaviors of the nations, groups, or subgroups to which they belong (Lipset, 1995). Herbert Hyman (1959/1969) reflected in the reprint of his watershed work, Political Socialization, that political behaviors are learned behaviors, and the fields of sociology and political science had long ignored this phenomenon. As with most forms of education, political socialization is directed primarily toward adolescents, in schools, clubs, organizations, and activities (Davies, 1977; Hyman, 1959/1969; Hess & Torney, 1968; Jennings & Niemi, 1974).

Several have contributed to the varying definitions of "political socialization." Political socialization is a process (Hess & Torney, 1968; Lipset, 1995; Roberts & Edwards, 1991; Sigal, 1965) by which "junior members" (Hess & Torney, 1968) learn the political norms, values, and behavior patterns of the nations, groups, or subgroups (Lipset, 1995).

These political norms and behaviors are "transmitted from generation to generation" (Sigal, 1965, p. 1; also see Roberts & Edwards, 1991). Kinder and Sears (1985) advised that the

> most common definition [of political socialization] implies society's molding of the child to some a priori model, usually perpetuating the status quo. Such terms as 'training,' 'indoctrination,' 'inculcation,' 'acculturation,' 'civilizing,' 'cultural transmission,' and 'adopting cultural norms' are common synonyms for this usage. (p. 714, emphasis original)

Political socialization is both the intergenerational transmission of political knowledge, norms, and attitudes from adults to children, and an academic discipline concerned with studying this complex system of transferring political knowledge, norms, and attitudes. While most scholars studying this phenomenon implied the recipients of this information are passive, Campbell (1979) and Sotirovic and McLeod (2001) argued that equally pervasive socialization tactics should yield equal political activity, but the learners' discretion and varied willingness to apply the lessons result in unequal political action. The recognition that political skills and involvement in democratic government are learned skills that are individually exercised is a crucial component of the scope and focus of this study.

The field of political socialization was fostered throughout the 1960s, in part due to the political turmoil that swelled in the United States society during that decade (see Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Dennis, 1973; Easton, Dennis, & Easton, 1969). Much of the work related to political socialization is 30 or more years old (e.g., Davies, 1977; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Dennis, 1973; Easton & Dennis, 1967; Easton, Dennis, & Easton, 1969; Hess & Torney, 1968; Hyman, 1959/1969; Jennings & Niemi, 1968, 1974; Renshon, 1977) and has a primary focus on ways children learn patriotism. The age of their work is problematic for at least three reasons. The first is a concern raised by Kuklinski, Luskin, and Bolland (1991), who

argued that political psychology as a whole and political socialization in specific is too heavily geared toward psychology and not enough toward understanding political development. In studies that are more related to ideological development or empirical understanding of political behaviors, their concerns might be germane. Because this study is not immediately concerned with ideological development, their concerns are not relevant here. Second, times have changed (e.g., Andreas & Schuh, 1999). Technology has provided more sources of information, families are more diverse than they were 30 years ago, and opinions of government and politicians may have changed over this time. Economic issues have become and are global, rather than local or even national (e.g., Singer, 2002). All of these changes are apparent on college campuses and in society, and these changes prove to be challenges to the success of student affairs practitioners, challenges further exacerbated both by the duplication of some student services offered by more academically-oriented departments and the scarcity of resources accessible in modern times (Andreas & Schuh, 1999). Third, the XXVIth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1971) has provided for 18-year olds to vote, a franchise not available and not considered in much of the work cited above. Nevertheless, in reading these dated works I found them descriptive of my personal life and relevant to how I am raising my children. I realize I am socializing them with the same values of patriotism I learned.

As an academic discipline, political socialization is a synthesis of three disciplines which all inform the hybrid. Cross-disciplinary work in cultural anthropology, psychiatry, and sociology or social psychology (Dawson & Prewitt, 1969) has contributed to an understanding of an intergenerational transmission of political knowledge, norms, and attitudes to children. Political socialization theory dictates "agents" of socialization that include the family (Davies, 1977; Dennis, 1973; Hyman, 1959/1969) and the media (Jennings

& Niemi, 1968; McGuire, 1985; Roberts & Maccoby, 1985; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001). Grammar and secondary schools and peers (Beck, 1974; Dennis, 1973; Hayes & Bean, 1993; Procter, 1991), attending college (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Giroux, 2001; Lane, 1959), and peers in college (Feldman, 1972; Wallace, 1972; Wilson, 1972) were also identified as agents. Wallace pointedly noted that the relationships in college foster community and political development, for collegiate environments are unique among other institutions in western society.

Hall (1954/1990) suggested that a triad of influences affect one's learning of societal expectations, influences he labeled formal, informal, and technical learning. Under such a model, formal methods of learning political activity (e.g., grammar school assemblies); informal methods (e.g., reverence for the national flag at a parade); and technical learning (patriotism as a part of childhood organizations), maximize the effectiveness of political socialization through the teaching about participatory avenues for a citizen in a democracy (Davies, 1977; Renshon, 1974). Children and young adults are especially susceptible to this systematic acculturation (Baker, 1971; Rafky, 1973; Renshon, 1977).

The awareness of political systems and the representations of power and law lead to a positive view of governmental institutions, thus fostering a high sense of political efficacy (Davies, 1977; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969; Dennis, 1973; Easton, Dennis, & Easton, 1969; Jennings & Niemi, 1968; Renshon, 1974). Hahn (1998) declared that contemporary political socialization in U.S. schools encourages polarization toward or away from political interest or participation, encourages feeling of gender equity in society and in political office, and underscores beliefs that politician are, generally, unethical, selfish, and corrupt. However, she notes, that children in the U.S. still develop a high sense of political efficacy and, theoretically, high degrees of tolerance of the abstract rights of others to share publicly

controversial views. These views are not confirmed when students are confronted with the rhetoric typically of communist, fascist or racist, or atheistic views.

Generational cohorts.

Thirteen years ago, Time Magazine ran a story about a generation they labeled as "twentysomethings" (Gross & Scott, 1990). The several characteristics of this generation included high rates of volunteerism, low rates of external political efficacy, and a community-focused value system. These young people choose local, political activism with limited goals; suspecting serious relationships, which provides for casual dating and deferred marriages; and avoiding commitments to college and career, although upon choosing a profession, frequently choose teaching because of the opportunity to contribute locally (Gross & Scott, 1990). Levine and Cureton (1998) wrote that today's college students "live in a world which they distrust the nation's leaders" and "have little confidence in the nation's social institutions" (p. 4).

Popular authors have described the contemporary traditional college-aged generation, or as noted in Chapter One the two generations now advancing through or toward college (Coupland, 1991; Halstead, 1999; Haworth, 1997; Loeb, 1994, 1999; Mayrack, 1998; Strauss & Howe, 1998, 2000). Comparing generational differences in leadership, Bennis and Thomas (2002) suggested older and younger generations – the younger comprised of Generation X and Millennial Generation members – differ paradigmatically, as different as "analog" and "digital" (pp. 10-11). Their paradigm supports and is drawn from an exemplar of the intergenerational difference to which they refer, as they stipulated "that the computer and the Internet have had a profound effect on those who grew up with them...providing instant access to information that may or may not be accurate" (p. 11).

Rhoads (1998a) declared comparing the activism of the 1960s-generation college students and contemporary students is "inevitable" (p. 35).

Andolina (2002) cited four "models of persistence" (p. 87) to suggest explanations for political and social interactions. Three of these four suggest a person is alternatively resistant or prone to change, given the political influences that act upon them. Of these, generational cohorts has popular and sustained appeal to political behavioralists. Members of a generational cohort are like-aged individuals who are strongly influenced by a major public event(s) or civic challenge(s), which occurs when members of the cohort are first politically aware (Mannheim, 1952c; Mayer, 1992). This (or these) event(s) promote political awareness in ways that are indelible and thus mass affected citizens into a cohort (Mannheim, 1952c; Mayer, 1992; Klatch, 1999). Mannheim's arguments, compiled in total after his death, advanced two points. First, knowledge is socially constructed (Mannheim, 1952a, 1952b), and second, social construction can be a function of class or generation, or a combination of these (Mannheim, 1952c).

Mannheim (1952c) argued that people in the same age group share a "common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action" (p. 291). Members of a society with a common background who witness an event are likely to experience that event in a way that will bond the generation, while people of different ages and people of different classes will have different depths or degrees of experience, and thus will create different interpretations of the event. Thus, "crucial group experiences act as 'crystallizing agents,' binding people of the same age into generation-units" (Klatch, 1999, p. 3). Mannheim (1952c) applied social construction arguments to the notion of a cohort. The cohort is not

perfectly generational, but is based upon commonality of experience, which has the net effect of appearing generational.

Turner and Killian (1972) and Bottomore (1979) suggested Mannheim's theory has some limited relevance, but that Mannheim undercounted the effect of social class upon a person's political outlook and interpretation of significant of events more than do generational effects. Their concerns are not well founded. Mannheim (1952c) argued that a generational cohort consists of like-aged persons who share a commonality of experience through which their realities are developed. Class is, thus, accounted for. Klatch (1999) provided a telling example: the galvanization of members of the 1960s youth generation did not necessarily develop into a single ideological perspective. Interestingly, delli Carpini (1986) argued a net effect despite what appeared to be disparate group. Even when considering citizens who identify as being more conservative, members of the free speech generation consistently poll more liberally on social issues than do either the generation before or after them (delli Carpini, 1986).

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) suggested several generational differences that have resulted in declining voter participation. Social movement activities have declined, which they attributed to changes such as moving campaigning from labor-intensive activities, such as door-to-door campaigning to mass-media strategies. Contemporary youth have a diminished sense of efficacy and are "less integrated into the social life of their communities" (p. 217). People are more mobile, attend religious ceremonies less regularly, and seldom have long-standing ties to associations. Political capital is premised upon community activities that steel civic political interest, and U.S. youth and young adults are engaging in these activities at all-time low numbers (Putnam, 1995a, 1997, 2000), despite possessing a national history that celebrates civic involvement (Skocpol, et al., 1999).

Conversely, Skocpol, et al., noted that "constitutional amendments, federal statutes, and federal court decisions" have removed the "legal obstacles to citizen involvement" (p. 214). While education is highly associated with voting and participation, a marked increase in educational attainment has not resulted in increased voter turnout.

Income disparity and the cultural and lifestyle differences within the United States inform that within any birth cohort, individuals experience and are socialized under a different set of economic, social, and political conditions Additionally, longitudinal data confounds aging effects, educational effects, and period effects (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Klatch's (1999) use of Mannheim's theory of generational cohorts demonstrates different orientations for understanding declining voter turnout and political participation.

Between-generation differences.

One study which analyzed levels of political activity between generations (Miller & Shanks, 1996, in Conway, 2000) identified three generations of voters from within the 1952 – 1988 data sets from NES; Miller and Shanks label these generations with reference to White House initiatives in place when the respondents could first vote in a presidential election. Pre-New Dealers voted in a much higher proportion than did the Post-New Dealers, therefore as Pre-New Dealers "aged out" of the electorate, overall voter turnout declined. Popular culture suggests "images of [the 1960s as] a time when all authority was defied and millions of young people thought they could change the world – either through music, drugs [or battling] injustice and war" (Gitlin, 1987, f.c.). Klatch (1999) concurred, "when people think of the sixties, they commonly associate the era with civil rights protest, with the student, antiwar, and feminist movements, and with the rise of the New Left" (p. 1).

Conway (2000) noted that "younger citizens are less likely to participate politically than are middle-aged citizens," and that "several social characteristics interact with age to

produce this effect" (p. 22). Marriage increases one's commitment to community just as one's spouse proves a powerful influence upon participation (Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Additionally, young people earn lower wages and are more mobile, moving more often than those over 25. Andolina (2002) noted that "significant steps in life such as owning a home, becoming a parent, or retiring, all of which are loosely but not directly connected to chronological age" (p. 87), due to these steps increasing the out-of-pocket cost of citizenship. Each of these generational differences influences one's political activities, thus contributing to citizens' political awareness, levels of community involvement, and types of political participation.

The trend toward lower voter turnout since 1960 can be explained through "turnout by generation and by age cohorts within generations" (Conway, 2000, p. 20). Structural changes in our society have been in place for the three decades since the free speech movement, affecting the nation's colleges and college students (Delworth, Hanson, et. al, 1991). Lipset and Schaflander's (1971) and Broido's (2000) assertions are typical: "college students have long been involved in efforts to develop more just and equitable societies" (Broido, 2000, p. 3). Rhoads (1997a) suggested that traditional-age college students learn about citizenship through purposefully political actions, but also through their daily routines. The curriculum of extracurricular environments that teach citizenship, racial equality, and cooperation also have a role in teaching citizenship skills to students (Bloom, 1987; Dalton, 1985; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gutmann, 1995), thus encouraging students to become concerned citizens (Cone, Cooper, & Hollander, 2001; Henning, 1998). One manifestation of citizenship is the volunteer experience (Gamson, 1997; Myers-Lipton, 1996; Hirsch, 1993), which is one of Generation X's demonstration of political action, demonstrated by taking social responsibility (Rhoads, 1997a).

Ehrlich (1999) asserted that if the intention is to also foster politically-engaged students, universities and colleges are failing to meet those responsibilities. Interestingly, Klatch (1999) found her informants had often begun their political interest during high school rather than college. Nevertheless, the collegiate experience stimulates a development of skills, an acquisition of knowledge, and increased intellectual abilities (Collier, 1984; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), which contribute to "increased political interest, which can lead to increased participation" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 27), thereby helping students to develop citizenship skills. Explaining the opportunism of the 1960s political movements, Klatch wrote that "colleges have a crucial role in fostering questions about the social and political politics of the times. University life also provides a built-in means of communication and a base for organizing, essential ingredients in political mobilization" (Klatch, 1999, p. 5).

Structural Barriers to Participation

Structural barriers to participation include some elements the citizen has little ability to change: the resources available, the macro views of political benefits available through participation, and the mechanisms of voter registration and turnout. Political scientists identify and address the reasons for non-voting, reaching conclusions that generally fall into one of three camps (Piven & Cloward, 2000). Of these, "two camps locate the causes squarely in political institutions...[while] the third camp locates the causes outside of politics, [citing] social or psychological characteristics" (p. 23; also see Crotty, 1991). While this third camp is significant to investigate, within the context of this study, the facts that college students vote more frequently than their non-college age cohorts and this study explores meaning in the decided political involvement by the study participants mitigates this area of investigation. Higher rates of participation suggest college students and graduates manage

the structural barriers with more ease and are therefore less effected by these barriers. While these structural barriers are important to note, it appears that college students will be more effected by psychological, rather than structural, reasons for non-voting.

Class is consistently noted as a barrier to participation. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) confirmed that because "the wealthy, the educated, the [politically] experienced and the efficacious can more easily afford the demands" of political participation (p. 6), they are more likely to take part politically. For blue-collar workers, labor unions mitigate some effects of class bias, although voting choices do not always appear to be reached independently. They also suggested that leaders of labor act as one of the politically elite players in a pluralistic democracy, and their clientele "participate when politicians, political parties, interest groups, and activists persuade them to get involved...[Labors' leaders'] strategic choices, their determinations of who to mobilize and when to mobilize, shape the contours of public participation in American politics in voting" (p. 41). Finally, even though voting is habitual, this continuity does not extend to other types of participation. Instead, different citizens move in to act while past activists reject participation, at least for the next election cycle.

Structural barriers for non-voting include voter registration requirements. However, registration is not the same as voting. When asked, entirely different reasons were emphasized by those who were not registered than those where were registered but did not vote in the particular election (Merriam & Gosnell, 1924). Structural changes in elections represent recent efforts to foster new or increase citizen participation. The 1993 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) represents a recent effort to further democratize American elections (Martinez & Hill, 1999; Wolfinger & Hoffman, 2001). The law, better known as "motor voter," requires states to offer voter registration at drivers' license and motor vehicle

bureaus, state aid agencies, such as AFDC and WIC, and public libraries (Highton, 1997; Piven & Cloward, 1996). Doppelt and Shearer (1999) provided excellent examples of nonvoting citizens, some of whom registered to vote with ease, due to newly enacted "motor voter" policies. Despite being registered, they did not vote in the 1996 Presidential election.

The initiative also lessens the effect of structural barriers through more permissive absentee or mail-in ballot procedures (Karp & Banducci, 2001). NVRA prohibites states from purging citizens from the registration rolls for non-voting and provides opportunities for citizens to change their partisan affiliation or home address (Highton & Wolfinger, 1995). These measures all seek to lower the "cost" of registering, voting, or participating. Moreover, a trend has developed toward citizen-initiated ballot initiatives (Gilens, Glaser, & Mendelberg, 2001), a social movement whose purpose is to increase perceived "rewards." The lowering of costs and the increase in rewards are premised upon a resulting increased voter efficacy (Broder, 2000; Gilens, Glaser, & Mendelberg, 2001; Hofstadter, 1955).

Participating in communities with developed social capital can negate structural barriers. Schnattschneider (1990/1960) insisted "it is relatively easy to show that the voters are more involved in the community than the nonvoters. The voters are better educated, better off, and they belong to more organizations than non voters" (p. 103). Social organizations have long fostered and represented the development of U.S. citizenship skills (Skocpol, et al., 1999; Tocqueville, 1950/1864). Influences that discourage democratic participation include voting registration procedures (e.g., difficult voter registration regulations, felony disenfranchisement laws), which in the United States impede voter participation, having a disproportionate impact upon citizens of low education, the young, and the poor (Mannion & Gibson, 2001; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980). Other barriers to participation include complicated processes leading to

citizenship (e.g., naturalization requirements) and mechanical barriers (such as antiquated voting techniques and machinery). Doppelt and Shearer (1999) categorize those who are prevented for voting, while Mannion and Gibson (2001) offered the critique: "today, the world's most technologically advanced nation has a 19th century voting system"(¶ 2). Mannion and Gibson argued that abuse of campaign finance laws, elections that are dominated by news media "spin" rather than thoughtful debate, the lack of civic literacy, and cynicism about the role of government and political leaders at all levels erode the public's trust of the electoral process, leaving little motivation to participate.

Political culture.

Political culture, a term suggesting the orientations a population possesses towards its political institutions (Sills, 1991/1968), affects citizens by perpetuating varying degrees of senses of political efficacy. Political culture has cognitive, affective, and evaluative components, and includes knowledge and beliefs about political reality (Almond, 1993).

The interpretation of political awareness and influence are visible as a collective impact of a society or subsociety, as well as among individuals in that society. The effects upon the individual citizen is better addressed as a psychological reason for nonvoting, but in this context, political culture describes the effect that influences have on macro societies (Conway, 2000). When a political culture possesses attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that are grounded in low political efficacy, the political socialization practices of that political culture leads to behaviors of that culture's junior members that are disassociated with the mainstream political culture (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). These attitudes can develop from institutional racism or from the systemic deficiencies evident in minorities and less privileged school districts (Campbell, 1996). Subjective orientations developed during immersion in a political culture towards politics can influence governmental structures and

performance. Democratic stability is related to the congruence between social and governmental authority patterns (Eckstein, 1992). This stability is threatened by non-participation, low senses of efficacy, and a political culture doubting the "legitimacy of polyarchy" (Dahl, 1989, p. 261).

Rational Choice Theory

The language and models used to describe economic markets can describe personal, commercial, and political decision-making (Downs, 1957; Miller, 1999; Mitchell, 1969; Ostrom, 1998; Page & Shapiro, 1992; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Weale, 1983). All social action is seen as rationally motivated and an expression of preferences, even when actions appear to be irrational or non-rational. The logical conclusion of rational choice theory is the formation of deliberative, self-governing democracies (Ryfe, 2002). Mitchell argues that individually and collectively, citizens use the concepts, if not the language, of capitalistic markets to make political decisions. Indeed, sociologists and political scientists have adapted the methods of economics to build theories around the idea that all action is fundamentally "rational" in character (Barnett, 1993; Scott, 2000), and Homans (1961) set out a basic framework of exchange theory, suggesting that individuals and organizations exercise rational choice "in pursuit of their subjective self-interest" (Mitchell, 1969, p. 103, emphasis in original). For simplicity, rational choice theory is treated here as a psychological, micro phenomenon rather than pursuing its application as a societal, macro phenomenon.

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argued "rational people choose the most efficient means to achieve their goals" (p. 22). Voters act within specific, given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting (Scott, 2000), as well as within the ways they are conditioned to exercise that participation (Diaz, 1998). Economics assumes that people are motivated by money and by the possibility

of making a profit, and this has allowed it to construct formal, and often predictive, models of human behavior (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). "Costs" are elements that a given up, then we receive "rewards." There are two elements in any exchange decision: "(1) how much of a polity (or reward), available at a given cost [per policy unit] does one want? (2) how much is one willing to give up in order to get it?" (Curry & Wade, 1968, p. 2).

While "costs" and "rewards" might have monetary value, imputed value can be assigned to actions or attitudes. Citizens' decisions to participate, and quite separately, actually participating, are contingent upon a person possessing the resources to expend on participation (e.g., time, education, citizenship/franchise) (Diaz, 1998). The effort required to register to vote, turn out to vote, or support a candidate, position, or issue can be seen as a "cost" while "rewards" can include the issue being approved (or defeated), one's candidate winning, or the psychological – if ephemeral – value of participation in democracy. "Voting is not a strenuous form of activity," argues Schnattschnieder (1990/1960), although "it is apparently beyond the level of performance for four out of every ten adults" (p. 95). For the "powerful" and the "power seekers" (Dahl, 1963), a.k.a., the political gladiators (Milbrath, 1965; Milbrath & Goel, 1977), the power of elected office, for themselves or for benevolent surrogates, is the anticipated reward (Olson, 1969).

Conscious social actors engage in deliberate calculative strategies, and these "rational actions" are shaped by anticipated rewards and costs (Homans, 1961; Vavreck, 2001). Individually, benefits, or as Lasswell (1936) penned "who gets what, when, how," are important in political utility models. Recipients of government programs are difficult to quantify, as data of direct beneficiaries are collected differently by several governmental agencies, while indirect benefits are illusive or hard to judge (Barnett, 1993; Curry & Wade,

1968; Mitchell, 1969). Nonetheless, much of political process and political participation is influenced by the concepts of reciprocity, costs and rewards, and social obligation (Scott, 2000). Importantly, Grofman (1993) questioned the verifiability of rational choice theory, and criticized the theory for possessing some contradictory premises and resisting empirical investigation.

Notwithstanding, anticipated benefits are the foundation of rational choice theory. Political systems allocate resources, and the motivation to receive benefits is assumed as a reason for participation (Easton, 1965; Schnattschneider, 1990/1960). At issue is the paradox: while self-conscious people could decide to act on common interests (Gillespie, 1988; Westphal, 1998), rational, self-interested individuals will seldom act voluntarily for common or group interests (Olson, 1971). When interests are shared, rational actors should prefer to let others pay the cost of goods that will benefit everyone.

Summary

Election statistics demonstrate a trend toward lower turnouts in successive national elections and non-electoral measures of political participation also are decreasing. Traditional-age college students' rates of voting and participation lag behind other age groups, although college students participate in civil activities more often than their cohorts with no college experience. This participation is frequently seen through community volunteerism, public demonstration, and registration to vote, if not actually voting. Low levels of citizen participation are described as a serious democratic problem (Lijphart, 1997; Schattschneider, 1990/1960).

Political knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, a condition affecting citizen participation and the responsibility for decision making. These characteristics accumulate into an awareness that citizens have of

their government and systems of governance. Participatory democracy, polyarchal democracy, populism, and pluralistic democracy differ in the systemic input levels for citizens. People choose the amount of participation they wish and/or believe beneficial. Rosenstone and Hanson (1993) "ask why people don't take part in politics" (p. 271). This chapter includes many theories addressing the phenomenon.

Characteristics of social location, such as social class, educational obtainment, occupation, age, race, and gender, influence levels and approaches of political participation. Disadvantaged groups often have a lower sense of political efficacy, the belief that the government will be influenced by an individual's participation. Social networks generate social capital, the interconnectedness that groups of individuals have influence, can expect a norm of reciprocity, and can combine to effect change. There is a paradox related to the supposition that social capital, and its companion phenomenon voter turnout rate, is in decline. More Americans than ever before are in social circumstances that foster associational involvement (pursued higher education, have reached middle age, etc.), but nevertheless aggregate associational membership appears to be stagnant or declining (Putnam, 2001). More people are attending and graduating from college, and this should increase political participation. However, "the decline of turnout...occurred despite the stimulating effect of increased education and the liberating effect of reduced legal barriers" (p. 212) represent "two important demographic and structural changes that should have fostered voter participation but did not" (p. 214).

People experience political socialization, which affects and is affected by their political culture, micro-cultures that form aggregate relationship and respond to political stimulus in predicable ways. Political culture correlates to social class, educational

obtainment, occupation, age, race, and gender of group members. College students more likely are affected by psychological, rather than structural, barriers to political participation.

Generational differences are important in this study because traditional age college students are asked to describe reasons they have chosen to be politically active. Generational cohorts are widely held as a predictive factor of political participation, providing closure to this long list of possible influences, the life-cycle hypothesis "hold[s] that people acquire resources that promote participation as they grow older" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, p. 157), which echoes to social location or rational choice, each suggesting life conditions that eventually wane as citizens reach retirement age.

In a rational choice analysis, each citizen relies upon their political awareness and influences to decipher and interpret important and relevant issues. Thus, one decides whether their anticipated rewards warrant the costs associated with political participation. Those costs may include money, time, and/or effort. The rewards may be concrete or abstract.

Resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks are the three predicators of traditional political participation (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). Political socialization and political cultural influences suggest that the group of affiliation and/or the acculturation sources enjoyed by a person reach a collected cost/benefit analysis for political participation. Junior members of the society are indoctrinated with these conclusions. Efficaciousness, a central theme to understanding motivations for political participation, is individually held by cultural expression, and while it may be difficult to know how we develop efficacy, understanding the grounds for it is a key to understanding democratic actions.

Chapter Three

Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

Within the qualitative research tradition, there are multiple approaches. Broido and Manning (2002), Denzin and Lincoln (1994a, 1994b, 2000a), Flick (1997), and Hatch (2002) have articulated neatly the history, currency, and some underlying perspectives of qualitative research. Of these, Broido and Manning (2002) and Hatch (2002) championed qualitative research for its direct applicability to student affairs and educational settings. Broadly, Tesch (1990) describes four general categories into which qualitative inquiry generally falls: exploration of characteristics of language, the discovery of regularities, the comprehension of the meaning of text or action, and reflection. The third element of this list best describes the purpose of this research, comprehending the meaning of an action. In synthesizing and reflecting upon Tesch's construction of qualitative methods, Drisko (1999) wrote that most qualitative researchers apply the same core set of research methods and share, across disciplines and professions, most data collection and analysis techniques.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the paradigms and methods used in this study. Throughout the chapter, qualitative research and the constructivist paradigm, the application of resident characteristics of qualitative research and constructivism to this study of undergraduate students, and the methods of constructing a representation of students' understanding of their personal political development are described. Discussions of qualitative paradigms; ontological, epistemological, methodological, and ethical

considerations; the recruitment and selection of research participants; research procedures; and rigor in the research are relevant to this qualitative research.

Within the qualitative tradition, the constructivist paradigm has a particular place and exhibits particular characteristics. A description of elements pertaining to qualitative inquiry and constructivist applications to research is provided in this chapter. Qualitative inquiry and constructivism exercise unique methods derived from stated ontological and epistemological beliefs. Description of the study design and discussion of the role that individual interviews will play in the research follows. From these individual interviews, the participants and I co-constructed (Hatch, 2002) personal histories and case studies.

Within Chapter Three, descriptions of the reasons for participant selection, the means to invite these students to participate, and the research plan and timeline are described. The ethical maintenance of the relationships between the researcher and participants is addressed. The chapter concludes with a recognition of germane elements of rigor in qualitative research.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has distinctive characteristics making it particularly appropriate to student affairs work (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2002). Its frequency in educational literature has become ubiquitous, "mainstream" (Jones, Arminio, Broido, & Torres, 2002, p. 431). Qualitative research is not a single unified tradition but instead a family of related approaches with different purposes, epistemologies, methods, strengths, and limitations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, 1994b, 2000a; Glesne, 1998; Lancy, 1993; Schwandt, 1989, 1994, 1997, 2000; Tesch, 1990). Central to the qualitative paradigm are beliefs that there are multiple realities (Schwandt, 1994, 2000; Tesch, 1990) and that people assign meaning to the objective

world, their valued experiences situated within a historical and social context. Holosko (2001) wrote

> all qualitative research requires the researcher to be actively immersed in the natural environment that he or she is observing. The subjective lens that the researcher brings to the subject of study is an important and integral part of such research. (p. 268)

There are three intermingled elements to qualitative research: first, immersed, integrated researchers must understand their paradigms, a paradigm formed by a reflection of personal ontology and epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, 2000a). Second, researchers must develop a research strategy using methodologies consistent with this ontology and epistemology. Third, the determined methodologies should then inform the selection of methods the researcher uses. These three elements, ontology, epistemology, and methodology, have a confluence within each research project, and the specific mix forms a unique characteristic in each research project. It is for that reason the next section addresses ontology, or our understanding of reality. Within the context of ontology, it is also necessary to address what the community of qualitative researchers calls the crisis of representation. Following that, epistemology and methodology are discussed.

A key aspect of qualitative research is its acceptance of the researcher's presence and reliance upon the influences of that presence on a study's participants (Broido & Manning, 2002). Therefore my personal beliefs and experiences are uncovered. This process is evident in the Introduction and in Chapter One, and aspects of my beliefs are observable in Chapters Three through Six. Presenting my perspective and the grounds for these perspectives is essential because "the researcher is the instrument of research" (Patton, 1990, p. 14). The disclosure of personal perspectives and opinions allows the readers to consider

the data and conclusions presented as well as the contemplation of transferring this research to other contexts. Such a disclosure requires self-understanding as well as an understanding of knowledge, ontology, and epistemology.

Constructivist Paradigm

The paradigm of constructivism is "described as a philosophy, an epistemology, a cognitive position, or a pedagogical orientation" (Nodding, 1998, p. 115), leading to Gergen's (1995) critique of the term "constructivism." Gergen (1995) reasoned that multifaceted, multiple uses of any word prevents understanding of the tenets of constructivism. In each usage, constructivism asserts two tenets: (a) a framework for a lifetime of interpreting or constructing a reality using available stimuli rests upon learned social constructs and cultural norms, and (b) this construction is an active, rather than passive, endeavor. Social interchange has a major role in constructing and representing knowledge, knowledge that serves communal functions and is only achieved through context-dependent social interdependence (Gergen, 1995).

Applied to this research, constructivism emphasizes knowledge as plural and related to individually-determined "truth," a truth grounded in the individual's unique, socially-constructed, culturally-based predispositions (Vanderstraeten & Biestra, 1998). This multiplicity of truth necessarily leads to a rejection of the notion that reality can be demonstrated as an objective representation. Mutually acceptable views of reality can develop from multiple people who are in a singular environment. In other words, individuals within the same environment can develop and articulate differing viewpoints (Hatch, 2002; Reamer, 2001). Researchers work with participants to 'co-construct' the relative reality as told by the participants (Burkitt, 1998; Gergen, 1994, 1995; Hatch, 2002; Reamer, 2001; von Glasersfeld, 1995).

Constructivism is an "adaptive activity" (von Glasersfeld, 1995, p. 6). A constructivist "seek[s] to obtain an in depth understanding about people and the context in which they live and work" (Manning, 1999a, p. 1). This context is everything – it is inseparable from the phenomenon under investigation (Hatch, 2002; Stake, 2000). Separating the phenomenon from the context destabilizes the presentation of both (Stake, 2000).

In describing the variety of research paradigms, feminist and critical theory paradigms are widely presented as being "near," similar, or sharing similarities with constructivism (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, 2000a; Hatch, 2002). Whether critical theory and feminist paradigms simply share characteristics with, or if they are located within (as advanced by Broido & Manning, 2002) constructivism, the elements of the first two informed my application of the latter.

This study was in part informed by elements of critical theory, in which theorists "examine how...institutions sort, select, favor, disenfranchise, silence or privilege particular groups" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 21). To consider the appropriateness of critical theory in this research, two questions are involved. While separate, the questions enjoy a great deal of overlap. The primary question of concern is: are the participants generally denied access to power or privilege? In reference to the individual participants, the answer to that question would be "no." The students who participated are largely homogeneous and most enjoy some social and economic privilege. Deciding the second question is more complicated. Do 18 – 24 year olds suffer, as a group, political oppression? Walker and Weinberg (1972) hypothesized college students as a "class" (p. 430), a group of citizens "sharing a common concern [and] relationship" with their governments. In fact, U.S. citizens who are 18 – 24 year olds have, except in controlled and finite situations, the right to vote. They have the

time to be involved in civic or political events, and the technological savvy and resources to consume news from multiple and obscure sites and thus to be well informed. Among all youth, college students are reported to vote at rates that are one-and-one-half times the rate of their cohort members who have no college experience (Tarrance Group, 2000). Therefore, I chose not to pursue critical theory as a line of inquiry, although it is important to recognize that this is a group from whom we do not hear.

Another approach for this study could be found within feminist theory. The question arises whether political socialization, structural barriers, or psychological barriers (such as political trust and efficacy) have conspired to disfranchise young voters. The effect of this proposed conspiracy can be overcome by social privilege, privilege being necessary, or at least certainly advantageous, for one to actually participate. The legality of the franchise is confirmed but the support to have genuine access (referring to the barriers) or a real stake in the outcomes (referring to the rational choice approach) is suspect. An analogy for college student franchise might be Western society's recognition of women's rights, in particular economic rights. In many respects, women have legal rights that are not upheld by societal or cultural norms or expectations. With relevance to this study, Broido and Manning (2002) provided evidence that "the field [of feminist theory research] lacks consensus about whether feminist research should focus on human similarities, regardless of gender" (p. 441). The application of feminist theory is an available and appropriate approach.

One premise of feminist theory applicable in this study is that participation in the research provides participants with a sense of empowerment. Hopefully, participants' efforts are rewarded as they develop an appreciation for the characteristics that caused them to be invited to participate (Lather, 1991). Despite the theoretical and methodological diversity within feminist theory scholarship, there are commonalities among the traditions (Holstein

& Gubrium, 1995). This study intends to capture an understanding of how some students embrace the democratic principles needed for citizen participation, as well as an understanding of whether and how the student culture is supportive of developing interest in political participation.

This study focuses on understanding the political motivations of participants. Qualitative researchers seek an understanding of shared phenomena as well as unusual or unique experiences (Mayoux, 2002; Patton, 1990). Constructivist research, which focuses on sustained relationship building and understanding the value of individual experiences, is hardly separable from good student affairs practice (Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2002). Through this exercise, new voices will give greater understanding to political participation. Manning (1999b) expressed the particular appropriateness of case study design in finding and documenting understanding of diverse experiences.

Ontology.

Mannheim (1952a) expressed a difference between two definitions of "truth." One he labeled "absolutist;" the other is a relative understanding. This Weltanschauung, a socially constructed interpretation of available observations, leads to an "analysis...natural science is not equipped to accomplish" (Kecskemeti, 1952, p. 13). Ontology addresses one's perception of the nature of reality, "whether the world exists, and if so, in what form" (Glesne, 1998, p. 4). It is "order [that] is created in the minds of individuals in an attempt to give meaning to events" (Hatch, 2002, p. 18). Interestingly, positivist "objectivity," Lincoln (2001) posited, is itself a social construct, and scholars in the social sciences have moved toward qualitative methods because multiple epistemological, methodological, political, and ethical criticisms are more fully represented by qualitative research. She argued that if reality

is socially-constructed, "then it makes no sense to postulate some other, more 'real' world, on which we might focus" (p. 28).

Crisis of representation.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000a) described the "triple crisis" that has emerged from the development of qualitative research. The first of these is a crisis of representation, resulting from texts describing the research and the finding, texts that are created from the researcher interacting with the participants. These texts are in the words of the researcher. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) underscored the root question: "can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other?" (p. 1050). The reader cannot know the experiences of the participants, only a representation of those experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 1996; Brady, 2000; Gross, 1981; Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). The role of the participants' voice(s) becomes even more problematic when we consider that those who conduct research (i.e., people for whom education or research is a career) typically enjoy, and therefore write from, social or economic privilege (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

Bochner and Ellis (1996) advised that the scientific method germinated from a culturally-constructed need for people to arbitrate truth. In fact, different people have different realities. Nowhere is this more apparent than within the disciplines of the social sciences. Accepting human subjectivity in research is a focus, an expected and desired result, of constructivist research. The descriptions of these differing realities are reflected in the "social texts created by the researcher ... [are] representations of the informants' 'lived experience[s]' " (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, p. 11). Qualitative researchers cannot "extricate" their work "from language. [They] make texts, try[ing] to report and represent accurately ... necessarily invent[ing] and construct[ing]" those they study (Bochner & Ellis, 1996, p. 20).

Gross (1981) contributed to the recognition that the social sciences, by relying on texts, have evolved into a science of texts. In qualitative research, "text is used as a substitute" for reality (Flick, 1997, p. 30). Thus, while constructivism is both a learning theory and an epistemology (Fosnot, 1996; Gagnon & Collay, 2000) there is a developing argument that constructivism does not qualify as ontology. Within qualitative research the text, rather than any item, understanding, or concept, singular or plural is reality (Flick, 1997). Ontology articulates one's perception of reality. Constructivism articulates that reality is not singular but is determined by each person differently.

Epistemology.

The question "what is knowledge?" defines the field of epistemology. Epistemological studies are a branch of philosophy and includes the attempt to distinguish true and false, or adequate or inadequate, knowledge (Heylighen, 2000; Newman, 1999). One contributor to progressive epistemologies has been Michel Foucault, whose work "challenges the basic underpinning of Western philosophy.... He counters the definitions of truth, knowledge, [and] power" (Hekman, 1996, p. 1). Foucault (1970) asked how we know what we know (epistemology). He raised three questions about knowledge, which he labels the "problem of change," the "problem of causality," and the "problem of subject" (pp. xii-xiii). Of the third, he "distinguished between the epistemological level of knowledge (or scientific consciousness) and the archaeological level of knowledge" (p. xiii), or asked if it is "legitimate" to separate known facts or conditions from the scientist(s) who discovered the fact. He asked, rhetorically, if the "subjects responsible for scientific discourse are not determined in their situation, their function, their perceptive capacity, and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them" (p. xiv).

Methodology.

Hatch (2002) provided three methodological camps for poststructuralist research: deconstructivists, genealogists, and data-based research. Deconstructivists examine textual representations of the world, and genealogists investigate processes using historical data. Researchers within the third camp are explorers, for they are seeking new ways to understand social phenomena. Methodology, or a "way of thinking about and studying social reality" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3), relies on reflecting upon the elements of ontology and epistemology. In this study, I utilize an ontology that asserts the multiplicity of understanding. People create personal knowledge that is unique to them and derived from their culture and the contexts of their situations.

Methods

The procedure for selecting participants and describing the methods used in this study are identified. The use of these methods is congruent with the paradigm of this constructivist inquiry.

Study Design

Marshall and Rossman (1989) counseled that "researchers should design the study according to the research question they seek to answer" (p. 42). This section describes the design and plan of the study, the selection of participants, and data collection and analysis. Case studies and personal histories will be developed from individual interviews. Typical questions were introduced earlier – these were generated from topics compiled during the literature review. While focused around "grand-tour" research questions, the themes introduced in Chapter Two will be morphed, adapted to conform to the emerging knowledge provided by the participants. The evolution of questions is facilitated through my use of conversationally-styled interviews. Successive interviews using evolving questions

permits and obligates me to explore areas of inquiry as the participants reveal them (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 1995). This section begins with a plan and timeline of the research, and is followed by a description of the selection of participants, a review of the merits of individual interviews and the methods of case studies, personal histories, and the collection and analysis of data.

Research Plan and Timelines

The purpose of this section is to present rationale for the selection of participants, including theory about participant sample, the role of individual interviews, my access to student participants, and the manner in which the individual interviews were conducted.

Selection of participants

My current professional position allows me to cultivate relationships with members of the faculty at the university where I conducted this study. Among the faculty with whom I have been successful in cultivating relationships are those in the political science department. Several members of the political science faculty accepted my requests to observe select classes, speak to these classes to solicit participants, and to provide the names of students from whom I could co-construct meaningful personal histories. I finally decided on one course – a capstone class for graduating seniors – and a personal recommendation from a faculty member for two additional students (both were involved in writing an honors thesis, and were therefore exempt from the capstone course requirement). Notably, the topic of the course is theories of political participation. The topics of the two theses are political leadership and media bias.

The solicitation of the participants and as many as three interviews with each participant took place during the spring semester, 2003. In each subsequent experience,

confirmation of my understanding and the developing codes were shared and confirmed with the participant.

The university setting for this research is a Land Grant and Sea Grant university in a New England state. It is the only doctoral granting institution, public or private, in the state, and has more than 1000 fulltime and another 1000 part time graduate students. Interestingly, while it is a Doctoral/Research Universities—Extensive institution, there is no graduate program in Political Science. The university enrolled slightly more than 7000 undergraduates in the Fall, 2002, semester, having conferred 1240 bachelors degrees in the previous year (Office of Institutional Studies, 2002). Across all class cohorts, one hundred twenty-six students have declared International Affairs–Political Science or Political Science as their academic major, of whom 70 are men and 56 are women. Seven men and three women participated, therefore women as study participants were underrepresented.

Participant sample

There is a range of approaches to selecting participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Glesne, 1998; Hatch, 2002; LeCompte, et al., 1993). Patton (1990) described the merits of several sampling approaches, including 14 types of purposeful sampling strategies. Hatch (2002) built on these sampling strategies that are frequently used in qualitative research. In this study, I use purposeful and convenient sampling. When relationships of power compromise voluntary participation, convenience sampling is sometimes inappropriate in an educational setting (Berg, 2001). In my role as a university administrator, there is an awareness that the college students who are participants in this study could develop a perception that a relationship between persons of unequal power. I was conscious of this perception and worked to mitigate any such power within our relationships. Purposeful sampling was used because of an expectation of eliciting information about political

motivations from students who demonstrate political interest (Schwandt, 1997). Of purposeful sampling, Denzin and Lincoln wrote that qualitative research often relies upon a "theoretical or purposive, and not random, sampling model;" that the researcher should "seek out groups, settings, and individuals where and for whom the processes being suited are most likely to occur" (p. 370). Franklin and Ballan (2001) and Flick (1997) suggested that absent identifying a sample representative of a distribution of the whole population when conducting research, some advantages come from having homogeneity in age or social situation.

The participant group was largely homogeneous. They are all students at the university and were deliberately recruited because they were majoring in the same academic program, political science. These actions obviously increased, rather than decreased, the group's homogeneity. Notably, the campus site of this study lacks racially or cultural diversity (9th-most homogeneity in a national ranking, Princeton Review, 2002). There were seven men and three women, one of whom is a person of color, the only non-Caucasian participant. There was some variance in the socioeconomic classes of the students. Finally, though I would have liked a more diverse participant group, I was comforted by the suggestion that having homogenous characteristics establishes a "consistency in findings and [provide] examples to...hypothesize about the limits of those findings" (Hill, et al., 1997, p. 278).

Individual interviews.

The methods of interview data informing case study and personal histories are grounded in a methodology consistent with Fontana and Frey (2000). They asserted that interviews have at least two phenomena. One is that relationships evolve and develop within the context of sharing, the trading of data between the interviewer and the participant. The

interview is a social encounter, one where the interviewer and the participant engage in reciprocal storytelling, and through the storytelling, data are identified that "accomplish coherence in their account" (p. 664).

A conversational style of interview, interviews that are open-ended and "focused around particular topics or may be guided by some general questions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 94, see also Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954; Merton & Kendall, 1946), were used. These "creative" interviews (Douglas, 1985) provide "considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the [participant] a chance to shape the content of the interview" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 94). Within such a conversational and open-ended approach to the interviews, spontaneous rather than scripted questions were used (Douglas, 1985; McCracken, 1988; Mowbray & Yoshihama, 2001).

Gagnon and Collay (2000) advised that there are four types of questions. The four types of questions they identified are: guided questions, anticipated questions, clarifying questions, and integrating questions. Guiding questions should create opportunities to engage or intrigue the participants. The oddly labeled "anticipated questions" should bring to the surface notions that might appear confusing to participants. Clarifying questions should show an understanding of student thinking, and probe and sustain the participant's [s'] thinking through questioning. Finally, integrated thinking moves participants toward a synthesis of group thought, or helps integrate multiple data points into a coherent understanding by the interviewer.

Stewart and Cash (1991) described open-ended questions as "broad, often specifying only a topic, and they allow the respondent considerable freedom in determining the amount and kind of information to give" (p. 55). The questions crafted above disclose the topic, but in most cases allow participants to answer in a way they choose. Many of the statements are

not in sentence form, but rather ask the participants to describe a feeling or an event. Jones (1996) noted, "technically speaking, some open ended questions are not even questions" (p. 145). Jones further noted that open-ended questions convey interest in the participants' views and trust in their judgment, and solicit "top-of-the-head" answers which help to develop more in depth knowledge or understanding of attitudes.

Mowbray and Yoshihama (2001) warned "open-ended questions are also problematic in that they sometimes are ambiguous or overly affected by the respondent's education or articulateness or by the interviewer's skill at probing" (p. 146). Recognizing the personal interactions to which I have grown accustomed, and through my professional training and practice, my skills are a good match for the method of open-ended, conversationally styled, individual interviews.

Patton (1990) suggested that researchers use open-ended, nondichotomous questions, although these questions do require later holistic coding. He also suggested limiting questions to one concept each and avoiding questions that begin with the word "why." Hatch (2002) clarified this point. In the interview, questions should not infer the researcher is judging the decisions of the participants and "why" questions often convey judgment. The conversations during in-depth interviews were structured around the open-ended interview protocol, in fact, while there are typical or suggested questions itemized later in this chapter, only the spirit of these questions were presented to the participants in the interviews. I used questions that reflected the spirit and, in general, the content of the suggested questions, but part of the theoretical underpinning of constructivist work is to follow participants wherever they go (Morse, 1994).

Constructivism supports the participants' abilities and freedom to direct the conversation. Hatch suggested an interview guide, a structure that helps the interviewer to

address relevant areas of research in the interview, all the while allowing the participant the flexibility to "go down a path ...valuing the informants' [sic] desire to talk about certain subjects" (p. 109). Combined with the use of prompts and "listening for opportunities to tactfully bring the conversation back around to the topic of interest..." (p. 109), the conversation where conducted to complement the data and analysis already developed. The interview conversations were audio-recorded and conducted in quiet, non-distracting environments, at a location requested by each participant.

Morse (1994) advised "as the study progresses, theoretical insights and linkages between categories increase....data collection and sampling are dictated by and become directed entirely toward the emergent model" (p. 230). The evolving questions and the use of the data that I heard from the informants were meted through my skills, and in the course of the interviews, I relied on my personal and professional communication skills to connect with participants to create a description of college students' political involvement.

Finally, although these interviews were not structured, they were still formal. There was a set time established for the interview, a meeting place agreed upon, and a tape recorder used. The distinction is germane. Hatch (2002) noted that in "formal interview settings, both researcher and participant know they are there to generate data" (p. 94). He reflected that it is flexibility in the interview that underscores the qualitative nature of the study and the research.

Interview Questions

In any conversation, the direction can be expected to change, the conversants expected to adapt. The intent of this study is to understand the experience of the participants. Respecting the possibility their information would drive the interview in a

different direction or to a different place, I still prepared an interview guide. These questions were placed conversationally in the interview.

a) Help me to understand your background. Tell me about your family, your neighborhood and hometown. Describe your background as it relates to family resources.

b) Describe events you remember that have provided insight into political activity. Describe people who have contributed to your political development.

c) It is especially hard for some people to be involved politically, and much easier for others. Describe your experiences related to being involved politically. What organizations did you belong to?

d) I am interested in how loosely or strongly you associate political interest and voting. What connections, if any, do you identify? Describe any experiences you have related to campaigning or voting for an issue or candidate.

e) Help me to understand the value you assign to being politically active. Are there "costs" to being involved? What "benefits" do you get from participating? What were the "costs"?

Narrative Studies

As noted, the participants include ten traditional-aged college students, and the questions asked focused on events, interpretations, and decisions of their lives. Hatch (2002) detailed the processes for taking participant stories and converting them into text representations – storytelling, personal histories, and the like – as narrative studies. The participants and I co-constructed their personal histories, the information providing insight both the participant and me, information specifically about the process of developing an interest in participation in civil politics. The resulting case studies and histories were

combined or presented separately, as appropriate or best to demonstrate the findings. Through the case studies on the development of civic political attitudes and involvement, data necessary to discover and describe events that are significant to this research topic were uncovered.

Fontana and Frey (2000) identified storytelling as a constructivist exercise, again holding those properties of critical or feminist theory that empowers study participants. Interviewing represents a relationship where the two participants – "interviewer" and "respondent" – become dependent upon each other, allowing both to become "an equal participant in the interaction" (p. 664).

Case Studies

A number of the arguments for the use of case study methods correspond to the purpose and questions guiding this study. Case study research evolved as a distinctive approach to scientific inquiry, partly as a reaction to perceived limitations of quantitative research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Case study method is appropriate for answering "how" or "why" questions, focusing on holistic description and explanation (McNamara, 1999; Winegardner, 1999; Yin, 1994), in particularly those related to contemporary events over which the investigator has little or no control (Maxwell, 1998; Yin, 1994). Investigators can use case study to "build bridges between phenomenon that otherwise might appear to be "islands" (Rhoads, 1998a, p. ix), isolated until their common connections are revealed. Since using case study methods permits the researcher to uncover the interaction of resident characteristics of a phenomenon, it is an appropriate strategy for answering the research questions (Winegardner, 1999). Case study method is especially appropriate when the data collection and analysis are placed into context or have a basis in previously established theory (Yin, 1994; Zelden & Pajares, 2000).

Stage and Associates (1993) provided a thorough consideration of case study as teaching and research models in college environments. They first attacked the formation of prominent student development theories for their methodological and socially nonrepresentative problems, then asserted that learners can struggle with making their own application from theory, even when the theory is thoroughly understood. Case study analyses have four advantages: they validate the multiple perspectives practitioners possess, validate and appreciate the unique campus contexts practitioners understand, and provide thorough teaching opportunities because the analyses require the learners to apply complexity when recognizing and discerning multiple issues.

Bennett and George (1997) argued that scholars within the constructivist or interpretative paradigms are well suited and are prepared to extract knowledge from case study. The ability to construct personal histories and co-construct meaning is among the reasons student affairs work and qualitative research are complementary (Broido & Manning, 2002; Jones, et al., 2002; Hatch, 2002; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2002). McNamara (1999) provided a strategy to successfully execute case study methods. First, all data about the case is gathered. Second, those data are organized into an approach to highlight the focus of the study. Third, a case study narrative is developed, through which an outside reader can understand what happened regarding the case. Fourth, the narrative is validated in a manner such as member checking. In some situation, case studies can be compared (Bennett & George, 1997; Stage & Associates, 1993; Yin, 1994); in fact, "researchers report their cases as cases, knowing they will be compared to each other" (Stake, 2000, p. 444).

Pilot interviews.

To insure my prompts and questions not inadvertently limit the possibilities of emerging data from participant responses about the process or content of civic political

participation or the desire to participate, I conducted a series of interviews with three students about their experiences in and motivations toward political activity. These interviews complemented my training and skills in counseling and group work and occurred under supervised conditions and within the context of a class assignment. These interviews provided the opportunity to improve my skills in conducting an interview and to practice the process of thematic coding. These interviews occurred prior to beginning this research. Data from the interviews are not included in the research findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a fundamental value, a primary concern of student affairs practice (see Principles of Good Practice, 1997) and of qualitative research (Christians, 2000; Glesne, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 2000). Nearly all who write about qualitative research address the expectation of ethic within the research. Four primary elements for a Code of Ethics were presented by Christians (2000), who listed four items: informed consent, freedom from deception, ensuring privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy.

To conduct this study, I provided two copies of a letter of informed consent, one copy of which each participant signed, returned to me, and are subsequently held at the University. In this study, the principles of voluntary participation and avoidance of risks were observed. The participants were advised that they always had the choice to participate or to withdraw from the study at the outset or at any intervening point, a point included in the letter of consent. Hatch (2002) was unwavering in his argument that the researcher has the responsibility to avoid coercing participants, and highlighted situations in which the participant may feel unable to resist the invitation. This may be due to work, school, or other power relationships in which the researcher is not involved, but a third party holding power supports the research.

There were no deceptive practices in this study. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) described this commitment to protect the identity of informants, to insulate them from embarrassment or other harm, to treat the participants with respect, to state clearly my expectations of their participation, and to write truthfully. I treated our conversations with confidence, and consistent with the letter of informed consent, I offered the participants an opportunity to create a pseudonym for the purposes of the final dissertation. No covert recordings of the images or conversations with the participants were made.

Other ethical elements are provided under the schemes of Hatch (2002) and the paradigmatically less progressive Bogdan and Biklen (1998). Bogdan and Biklen wrote that the researcher is responsible for the protection of the participants from harm. Their guidelines attempt to ensure that participants understand the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations involved. This is clearly related to the second item of Christian's (2000) list, freedom from deception, but is more complex. The researcher holds an obligation to protect the participants from unnecessary or undue risks. There are limited foreseen risks in this research project. The topic of political involvement is not one that should cause alarm or psychotic trauma, particularly to students in their senior year in a political science baccalaureate program. In fact, as informed by feminist theory, the participants' involvement in this research has the potential of being freeing or empowering. There is evidence this potentiality, for some participants, was realized.

Hatch (2002) offered two elements deserving ethical consideration. Qualitative researchers are schooled in the importance of building rapport with study participants. The establishment of rapport between researcher and participant is critical and leads to richer, more candid, and more genuine data (Glesne, 1998; Janesick, 2000; Schwandt, 1994, 1997). Effort is made in data collection to build rapport with participants to encourage candor and

high quality information. However, Hatch increases the stakes, and referred to "reciprocity" within the relationship as an ethical standard. He wrote that establishing reciprocity "is especially important when participants invest themselves in close relationships with researchers and trust them with sensitive information" (p. 66). This assertion reflected the principles espoused by, among others, Lather (1991) and Manning (1999b).

Finally, Hatch (2002) rated the opportunity for participants to provide feedback to the researcher as an ethical standard. The logic is sound; doing so supports the quality of rapport, the expectation of the researcher that the data discovered is genuine, and that the purpose of the study has integrity. This feedback enables the researcher to improve their skills, an unintended but nonetheless important consequence. The conversations and this report of findings are the result of honest exchange between the participants and myself.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed after transcribing the notes I took and the audiotapes I recorded during the interviews. After completing the transcription, I began analyzing and thematically coding the texts to identify similarities and differences, consistent and inconsistent strains, and areas for future exploration. I shared the findings with and sought assistance and perspective from a colleague, who acted as a peer debriefer (Glesne, 1998). In this section, I describe the processing, analysis, coding, and process of member checking of data utilized.

Processing the Data

Following each interview, I listened to the taped interview in its entirety, calibrating my hand written notes to recorded comments made during the interview. These notes addressed changes in the participant's tone, mood, or other obvious pivotal points throughout each interview. Transcription of these sessions then occurred, using standard

word processing software. From the transcripts and the notes taken during the interviews, I extracted significant statements. These significant statements formed the basis for the themes or codes that developed and thus represent the findings of this research.

Analysis of Data

Interpreting data is central to qualitative research, the "challenge [of which] is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Patton, 1990, p. 372; also see Flick, 1997; Hatch, 2002). The process of qualitative research is subjective, and presenting the findings is a complex enterprise, for

> there are no ways of perfectly replicating the researcher's analytical thought processes. There are no straightforward tests for reliability and validity. There are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study. (Patton, 1990, p. 372)

Hatch (2002) provided a thoughtful and full explanation for six types of qualitatively-obtained research data. Among these, a linear approach generally used for grounded theory development involves three steps of coding, "linear, open-coding," "axial coding," and "selective coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Flick, 1997). Less exacting, more nonlinear analysis can also be used. The latter stipulates the processes of data collection and interpretation are really a singular, interwoven procedure, in which both data collection and interpretation are applied either alternatively or successively. The nonlinear process is integrated. Flick (1997) reasserted:

> this approach the interpretation of data cannot be regarded independently of their collection or the sampling of the material. Interpretation is the

> anchoring point for making decisions about which data or cases to integrate next in the analysis and how or with which methods they should be collected. (p. 178)

Flick (1997) noted the interpretations of text might pursue two opposite goals. One is the revealing uncovering or contextualizing of students in the text which normally leads to an augmentation of the textual material. For short passages in the original text, page-long interpretations are sometimes written. The other aims at reducing the original text by paraphrasing, summarizing, or categorizing.

Focusing on the first two phases, understanding the researcher and the interpretative paradigms, it is important for self-introspection. My background influences my perspectives, and understanding that fact, and how I have been influenced, is important. The culmination of these influences informs the awareness I have of my political self within this political system. The interrelationship of these influences – both symbiotic and distinct – affects my interpretation of newly introduced issues. Such a model is introduced in the prelude to Chapters Four and Five to explain the political meaning created by study participants, but its application here – distilling data in a qualitative study – is similarly just. Self-reflection serves to understand how my work influences my perception of civil political participation and the environment shared by the ten traditional-age college students.

I stipulate that I am an influence, knowingly or unwittingly, upon the students with whom I discuss political activity. Both feminist and critical theory paradigms anticipate that participants in a research effort are rewarded by developing an appreciation for the characteristics that caused them to be invited to participate (Lather, 1991). As presented above, advocating for social change on behalf of politically interested, perhaps involved and voting students, students who are predominately white, hardly meets the criteria of critical

theory. The proportion of men-to-women in the participant sample neither eliminates nor negates the application of feminist theory. Embracing the opportunity to play a role in encouraging students, even those from privilege, to understand and exercise their political rights is appealing. I believe that political interest can and does exist in college students, that the reasons for the different levels of participation, the different levels themselves, and the informants' desires to act upon those levels and motivations are diverse. Those beliefs support this project as a constructivist activity and make constructivism an appropriate paradigm for this research.

Member Checking (Communicative Validation)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested three discrete periods when participants should be invited to give feedback: during interviews, in the midst of coding and analysis, and to "obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed by the informants, or to correct, amend, or extend it, that is, to establish the credibility of the case." (p. 236). Participants in a study are invited because they understand the context – Dann (1990) called their expertise "functional knowledge" (p. 232). The participants should be considered a resource from which the researcher can learn, confirming the accuracy of the researcher's understanding, and thus improving the study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited the following benefits of this immediate and informal checking. They advocated for immediate member checking because it provides the opportunity (a) to assess the intentions of the informant, (b) to correct errors of fact and interpretations, (c) to volunteer additional information, as the act of 'playing back' may stimulate the respondent to recall additional thing, (d) to agree to the correctness of the interviewer's recording of them, thereby making it more difficult later for the participant to claim misunderstanding, and (e) to summarize – the first step along the way to data analysis.

Data Collection Summary

Data collection is purposefully triangulated through the use of individual interviews and member checking. In addition to data triangulation, the study is strengthened through the evolutionary protocol approach whereby feedback from one data source informs the research protocol for subsequent inquiry. Although I have developed guiding questions around political participation, the exploration for data insists that I pursue relevant lines of inquiry when the interviewee presents these lines. In keeping with the evolutionary approach used in this study, questions may be refined, added, or deleted as the study progresses.

At the same time, care was taken to preserve the limited anonymity of all participants who share their personal insights and perspectives. With the permission of participants, interviews were audiotaped, then transcribed from tape to text. The origination of themes and codes were confirmed through a peer debriefer, a trusted colleague had access to the stories, transcripts, and audit trails that were generated. The resulting findings are presented in Chapters Four and Five.

Rigor

Lincoln (2001) traced the history of the construct of validity within social science research. She posited that all research must convey an answer to a base question: "what is it about this inquiry which would render it transparently faithful enough to enable me to act upon its findings?" (p. 25). She noted the "five 'general standards for validity'" advanced by LeCompte, Milloy, and Preissle (1992):

> ensuring a fit between research questions, data collection procedures, and analytic techniques; ensuring the effective application of specific data collection and analytic techniques; being alert to and cognizant of prior

> knowledge; being cognizant of both internal and external value constrains; and assessing a study's comprehensiveness. (in Lincoln, 2001, p. 35)

Validity, in the scientific method, is reached through careful subscription to procedures (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln, 2001; Sandelowski, 1986). Lincoln (2001) asserted that validity is pursued within positivism by using the scientific method, as poststructuralism and postmodernism have evolved this method was deemphasized. Positivist and postpositivist efforts to attain validity have failed; in fact validity in any research is elusive, because researchers "have no access to the 'real world'...every research finding is a form of approximation of what we believe some 'real world' might look like" (p. 26).

Still, publishing research assumes that some measure of confirming the veracity of the process and the findings of research is delivered to the reader (Lincoln, 2001). To that end, a number of criteria that validate processes of qualitative research studies have been proposed. For example, Arminio and Hultgren (2002) proposed a criterion of goodness "as a way to view, rather than to define, quality in qualitative research" (p. 446). To provide a process for the confirmation of this research, I am addressing two rubrics for verification. These schemes consist of a number of criteria, from which the reader will find trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 1995; Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Trustworthiness Criteria

Until recently, qualitative researchers were continuously justifying the utility of qualitative inquiry. One approach in explaining the integrity of the data and analyses was to approximate in qualitative inquiry the conditions for conventional, quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 1995; Patton,

1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As qualitative research has evolved and become both more understood and recognized, the research standards used to demonstrate rigor have changed. Lincoln and Guba (1986) proposed four alternate criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry, procedures of qualitative research that approximate empirically-deduced processes rather than "newer" traditions of research (Lincoln, 2001). New and useful standards have been refined to reflect unique characteristics of qualitative research. For the time being, trustworthy criteria remain germane to qualitative research, including this project. The criteria of trustworthiness – credibility, transferability, and confirmability – are addressed below.

Credibility

To stress the importance of credibility in qualitative research, Patton (1990) advised "the credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytic process" (p. 461). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested credibility is grounded in a desire to approximate the methodologies of qualitative work with empiricism, to which they maintained the study must be "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (p. 296). They proposed several techniques for enhancing credibility. While the desire to justify the rigor of research vis-à-vis quantitative methods is no longer useful, there are bona fide ways to assert credibility in qualitative inquire. Among these is the use of member checking.

Transferability

Transferability within qualitative methodology is a judgment reserved for readers of the research project. Rather than concerning oneself with "external validity," the qualitative researcher discovers meaning from descriptions confined to a certain time and context.

Applying knowledge gained through research is a decision that rests with the reader of the research results, and this application is facilitated though understanding the context – the complex, social situations – of the phenomenon under study. Commonly referred to as "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), the researcher should provide detailed description of the participants, the location and roles within the study, and other specific information that allows readers to make an informed judgment about whether they can transfer the findings to their own situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2000).

Confirmability

The criterion of confirmability approximates the scientific method concept of objectivity. Patton (1990) suggested "perhaps the most common concern about qualitative methodology is the subjectivity of the observer" (p. 479). Nevertheless, most qualitative researchers attend to the inherent subjectivity of all social research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b, 2000a; Patton, 1990; Stake, 1995). Patton (1990) advocated that qualitative researchers strive for "empathic neutrality" (p. 475). He argued not for detached objectivity; instead "evaluators should strive neither to overestimate nor to underestimate their effects but to take seriously their responsibility to describe and study what those effects are" (p. 474).

Authenticity

Lincoln (2001) described the development of authenticity criteria, which is distinguished from trustworthiness criteria. Acting upon an intention to sever the reliance on foundational criteria, including trustworthiness criteria because they are rooted in and derived from positivism, Guba and Lincoln (1989) developed authenticity criteria. Authenticity criteria consists of five elements of validity: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity.

Acknowledging the fourth item of this list illustrates a significant difference between detached, empirical paradigms or research and progressive paradigms such as feminism, which is a constructivist paradigm. Catalytic validity, advanced by Lather (1991),

> represents the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it.... It flies directly in the face of the positivist demand for researcher neutrality. The argument for catalytic validity lies not only within recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process, but also in the desire to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ultimately, self-determination through research participation. (p. 68)

In addition to providing self-awareness and self-determination through participating in the research, the experience is thought to be emancipatory which requires of the researcher to be prepared to help the participant find freeing experiences.

The criterion of fairness is directed at a balance of power, one that exists within each relationship between participant and researcher. Related to the ethicality of research, being fair includes conscientiousness on the part of the researcher to find and respect balance. One of the ways this can be demonstrated is through openly sharing researcher impressions with the participant(s). This act can contribute to the second criterion, ontological authenticity, which echoes the goals of catalytic authenticity. Ontological authenticity measures the "extent to which research participants become more aware of their own thinking....the extent to which engagement in a project makes stakeholders more aware, more cognizant to their own sensemaking processes is a measure of validity of the research process" (Lincoln, 2001, p. 34).

The feminist research tradition is also evident in the third and firth elements as Lincoln continued to illuminate authenticity. In the criteria of tactical authenticity, she provided an example related to social justice, in which she infers that a researcher investigating a phenomenon may become aware of ways participants can benefit from a resource,. In this case, the researcher will stay in the field past the point of data collection to provide training, support, or access to those needed resources. Tactical authenticity is tied to both catalytic and educative criteria, the former focusing on research participants learning about the experiences of other participants, with the researcher in some cases being the conduit of data. Accepting this authenticity criterion not only devalues the positivist approach of detachment between researcher and participant, it asserts that the researcher's influences on the participants and the data are expected!

I do not anticipate the students who participate in this study will require emancipation in their budding political participation. These students do not likely need freeing. Still, the anticipation of confirming their political involvement and the thought that this project may encourage them to vote or be politically active is appealing. I do hope I confirm for them the value of their individual political activism.

Summary

The constructivist paradigm, the approach used in this study, asserts that personal experience and socially-constructed meanings result in a multiplicity of realities, a diversity of knowledge. Individuals determine truth, and research seeks to find truth according to study participants. Most participants share homogeneity of race, age, and place, and all majored in the same undergraduate academic program, political science.

The research utilized individual interviews. Ten students participated in a series of interview, and the conversations were used to tell the story of political awareness and

influence, of an identification of relevant issues, in short, by creating case studies (Bennett & George, 1997; Stage & Associates, 1993; Stake, 2000; Yin, 1994). I used questions that were open-ended and worked to develop theoretical insights and linkages between categories of the data. I converted data into text representations through storytelling and the development of personal histories and perspectives, case study presentations, and comparisons.

Ethics is a fundamental value in student affairs practice and qualitative research. I described a number of elements which form ethical standards in research and observed these standards. In consideration of my ethical approach to this research, I recognize that discussing political activity can influence a participant's future political activity. Change is not the purpose of the investigation, but I welcome its possibility.

Two sources of validity criteria are considered in this research. The first scheme ensures trustworthiness in the research, the second authenticity. Trustworthiness has been used in qualitative research and has acquired orthodoxy. I conducted member checking and utilizing thick description. This project also adheres to the demands of authenticity criteria, which consist of five elements of validity: fairness, ontological authenticity; educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity; and tactical authenticity. I will support and will work to endorse a freeing, emancipatory experience for participants, a balance of power within the relationships I have with each participant, ontological and tactical authenticity which relate to social justice, and finally a tactical authenticity that allows research participants to learn about the experiences of other participants.

Chapter Four

Findings: Participant Profiles Reflect Diverse Political Understanding

Conducting thirty interviews over the course of four months and documenting those interviews is a large task. Within the qualitative research tradition, the method of in-depth interview is a common approach. Suggesting a strategy for reporting the data collected in such research, Merriam (1998) promoted first presenting in individual case studies then offering a cross-case analysis on germane commonalities.

Chapters Four and Five

Merriam's advice thus formed the presentation of the interviews. Chapters Four and Five are composed of illustrative statements proffered by the study participants, and are presentations of the understanding of the political process and the meanings each participant attributes to their interest in politics.

Personal Profiles of Participants

In Chapter Four, the organizing principle for the presentation is to profile, first, the cluster of students in accordance with the three clusters of student responses. These three clusters are the result of the development of a two-by-two grid, common, of course, in a variety of settings. The application of two-by-two grids in JoHari Windows (Luft & Ingham, 1955); Foucault's (1982) interplay between the silent and the heard and between the visible or invisible; or an typical Chi-Square analysis prove its facileness. While not especially sought during the investigation, the nature of ideologically-orientated conversations helped me to

determine whether the students in the study were especially given to international or domestic politics.

One of the participants, Ryan, helped place the importance of international politics and domestic politics into relief, saying of "both roles, certainly. I don't want to go overboard – but you have people at home to take care of, to protect them from all those other things." Other participants also spoke of this split: Nathan told me, "domestic politics, though I find it interesting, it's much more of an academic thing. I'd much rather focus on the international politics." Using the inspiration of the participants, then, I created a two-by-two grid, distinguishing comments and participants focused on national or on international politics. As I did so, a pattern emerged: a figurative line on which I could place the ten students, all of whom are described in Chapter Four.

Three Clusters: International-Status Oriented, Locally Active, and Domestic-Politics Oriented Participants

First, I describe the two students who focus on international politics. While not an organizing dictum, it is interesting to note the two students who are concerned primarily with international relationships also supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The final cluster describes those participants for whom national politics is the most important. These five favored domestic agendas, and national politics receives the greater part of their attention. In contrast to this first and third group, which detailed students who are alternatively invested in international or domestic politics, the second cluster are described as "locally active." These participants display only slight interest in formal politics. Instead, the focus of attention and effort for these three is on public service. Two of these students are concerned almost singly with domestic issues and local activism, while the third sees in his hometown community in desperation, and described the search for an escape from the formal, political system.

These three categories are descriptive at best. The multiplicity of views each student presents preclude this taxonomy from being pure. For example, the Domestic-Politics Oriented group is interested in international policy initiatives. Importantly, though, these initiatives are interpreted according to the impact they have on internal politic decisions. Conversely, the International-Status Group recognizes the role that domestic politics plays in governance. The Locally Active Group has a keen awareness of both international and domestic agenda items, but it is not this interest that carries their activism.

Within each of the three clusters, then, the individual students as well as some key elements that bind them within this taxonomy are portrayed. Later, in Chapter Five, the organizing principle changes to being issue-oriented, exposing common or contrasting perspectives shared by the study participants.

Alternative Presentation Schemes

As Chapter Four, then, is a vehicle for introducing through profiles the ten students, the matter of how to introduce them became important. Some relevant if sanguine models explaining political participation and political interaction were offered in Chapter Two. The four categorized explanations presented in Chapter Two was a perspective rubric. Applying the concepts of social location, psychological explanations for participation, structural barriers to participation, and rational choice theory presented promise. During the study, participants exhibited an understanding of social capital and an expectation of learning through community service; addressed political socialization, social location, and rational choice computations; described the barriers to political involvement; and political efficacy as well as political trust. While all these phenomena were interesting, they are neither discrete nor exact, ergo minimizing and ultimately excluding the use of this categorical scheme of Chapter Two.

Another potential scheme was Milbrath's (1965; also see Milbrath & Goel, 1977) suggestion of political gladiators, spectators, and apathetics, titles that connote differing levels of political participation. While informative in general, categorizing the students in the study did not highlight one of the more surprising discoveries in this study: none of the ten participants could properly be called or even aspires to a gladiator. Less dramatically but equally problematic for the application of the Milbrath terms, most of the students could not be adequately described as an apathetic. Therefore, his model was not especially useful for explaining the data or the results of the study. Similarly, while most of the students could fit within the "political" strata of Dahl's (1963) model, grouping most of the participants in that category without having an apropos use of the "apolitical" or "power-seeker" categories makes the distinctions of the model ineffective.

Lastly, I attempted to use or modify Doppelt and Shearer's (1999) scheme. From their data, they identified six categories of typical nonvoters in the 1996 Presidential election. The authors employ the technique of telling rich and involved stories of people's lives, citizens who demonstrate the statistical finding of the study and what makes the resulting book, Nonvoters, an interesting read is their mixed method approach: each category described includes a collection of citizen profiles. However, it became apparent that because their model was not designed for the study of making meaning of the politically active, the model as fruitless in describing the participants in the study.

International-Status Oriented Group: Global Manifest Destiny

Two student participants, Nathan and Dewey, describe an understanding of the world in which the American influence is beneficial. Nathan views politics as important, not for its internal, domestic policy debate, but for its aspect of international affairs. Raised abroad, he is impressed with the status and image of the United States and its Navy:

> being overseas, being an American, it helped me ... I had an opportunity to experience my country at work more than others do, I think. My parents are overseas missionaries, so I grew up overseas, as an American citizen in the Philippines. When I see the flag, it's good to me, for me. I see American solders as a positive symbol rather than a negative symbol, as it is for a lot of people. I see the American government as a positive thing.
>
> Growing up with American soldiers, American ships, American stuff, as positive influences; for the simple reason of being overseas, it gave me more of an appreciation of how much of an international game it is. I'm much more interested in how nations relate to each other, which is political science. I like playing RISK; on my computer games I want to take over the world.
>
> But I also want to see what's behind that, what really, what did that. To some degree, I needed "in" on that game. So, I guess that's how I, why I took political science. That dynamic – it might be what really matters in the world, what drives the world. Politics drives the world. So, I feel like I should be, if I'm going to understand it, be a part of it, I have to understand that drive. I want to one of those people who moves and shakes the world.

Nathan's perspective advocates the U.S. acting as "the glorified, defenders of the world." He does support the notion that

> as a community of nations, there is a responsibility to every nation to look out, for not only yourself but for your neighbors, especially in today's world, the globalization. In the older days, the ancient days, before time began, you could certainly do that because nations were a lot more sovereign. But even then, you couldn't ... what happened in one nation could certainly sweep over into your nation. So I think we have a responsibility to other nations to begin this.

He also cautiously recognizes that

> each nation does what is best for it. I don't know, but I think the world's policemen – I'm nervous because I see where it could potentially go. I think the idea of "where are you going to stop? are you going to invade every little country?" I think that's, that's problematic. I'd be very careful about doing that. On the other hand, I lived in a country where U.S. intervention was a positive thing, generally.

Like Nathan, Dewey also prefers the international view of politics to a domestic one. In the first minutes of our first conversation, Dewey explained he is

> an officer in the Army right now, just finishing up my degree before going on active duty. I'm a second lieutenant. I went to a military junior college for my first two years; they commissioned me after two years, instead of four. You can get your associates degree and a commission, then go off to a regular college. So I'm finishing up here, and I'm a mountain infantry platoon leader on the weekends.

My interactions with Dewey were nothing but pleasant. To be faithful to him and fulfill his request of me, I first want to acknowledge that views attributed to Dewey are his views, and not that of the armed forces. Secondly, he helped me to change a bias I didn't really know I had. Rather than the ideologically conservative person I expected, I found Dewey to be progressive in his opinions about social policies and domestic agendas. The care that he has and the reflection he provided was evident in his suggestion that the

> role of the National Guard has been changing, now. It used to be they were National Guard, I mean, they didn't go anywhere; they were just here, in the country. But now they are just getting called up continually. My sense of it, and this is just me, but we're already deployed all over the world. We've already got Bosnia, Kosovo, Korea – we've had Korea for a long time, Afghanistan. We've got a lot of people everywhere, and more and more people are being sent out.

When I suggested to him that he did not fit within the opinions I held about military personal and their perspectives, Dewey hypothesized that

> I don't think that I'm all that uncharacteristic at the moment. The military is getting more educated, as time goes by. I mean, I talk to a lot of people, and even if it's not formal education, like reading, stuff like that, the fact is that people are getting deployed everywhere now.

He continued by noting that the entertainment media portrays military characters with clichés that support certain prejudices. He said,

> I think that the news media to some extent, and in popular culture, certainly, there is a certain portrayal of military personnel as being these gung-ho killing machines. That's untrue, really. The number of soldiers with families, for example, is skyrocketing. That hardly fits in with being a killing machine.

Another interesting characteristic I discovered in Dewey was his approach to leading his unit. His supervisory style is grounded in the development of relationships with his subordinates (see Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998), although he recognizes that such a supervisory approach is appropriate in a limited number of situations:

> In an active duty unit, it's important to keep that separation because most of the privates are just out of high school, and I'm told that if you buddy up with them, they won't listen to you. So, you've got to maintain a strict separation. However, in my unit now, most of them, well, 75% of them, are off of active duty, they know what's going on, they are sergeants, specialists, people like that, they're experienced; they know a hell of a lot more than I can. But in addition to that, they're very well disciplined.
>
> I have the best platoon in my battalion right now. I'd like to say it's because of my uncompromising commitment to excellence, but the truth is, it's my soldiers. They're fantastic soldiers, and I think the reason they perform so well is because they recognize that I'm not going to screw them. They've gotten in trouble a few times and I've gone to bat for them, and taken the heat for them myself. They recognize that, and because of that they work hard for me.
>
> For me, I've found that I can go out, one of the few times we actually get evenings off, we can go out to a night club or whatever, throw down a few beers with them, and it hasn't presented a problem. It would, I'm sure, present a problem if we were on active duty, so I think I'll have to adjust that.

Important to the categorization used here to describe him, I found Dewey to be knowledgeable about international and global cultural issues; he is able to project his own world picture in terms of hot spots, diplomatic challenges, and the role of the United States. His interest in political science, he said, is more truthfully an interest

> in history and systems of government. I guess I would have been a history major, but I wanted the systems of government, maybe a little political philosophy added in there. That's my main reason, because of the history, mostly. Political science is mostly just the study of how politics work, and I think that people who study political science serve as advisors a lot of the time, and serve in government, in non-political government jobs, like say the State Department, or stuff that should be non-political. Comparative politics is my real interest, my interest in political science, at least.

Finally, Dewey is phlegmatic about any personal political ambition. He said,

> you can't really ... with the way our army works; you can't really be a political leader. It's non-politicized. And the Army will probably be my career. I can't see myself doing anything else, really.

The War

Between the first and second rounds of interviews for this study, the United States began its campaign on Iraq, in Operation Iraqi Freedom (see Ratnesar, 2003). Among the ten students in the study, there was a diversity of opinion about the need for or the propriety of us engaging in war. Some were singularly opposed to war, while some agreed that there are contextually appropriate reasons for waging war. The latter questioned whether the known facts, the antebellum international perception of the United States, or the human costs of this war justified war in this instance.

The two most comfortable with a U.S. declaration and engagement of war were Dewey and Nathan. Again, Nathan would like to be a political science professor while Dewey already holds a commission in the U.S. Army and the National Reserve. Dewey bemoaned the effect of Saddam's leadership, noting that the Iraqis

> had a great...they had a middle class ... If you could get Saddam Hussein to step down, that would be wonderful. There are definitively times when maybe you should say, "I don't know if we can ... this might be the right thing to do." I don't know if we can win doing it, and it's better not to do it, not to support someone who needs our help, and not lose, than to try to support them and lose. Again, with Vietnam, I think it's one of those, should you go full throttle in this war? or should we pretend that it's not a war?

Dewey "would rather that we would go to war with Iraq, personally, mostly because I dislike Saddam and the Ba'ath party in general. They've done some really nasty things to the Middle East." Both he and Nathan demonstrate a belief in civil rights and U.S.-styled democracy, and respect for the power and U.S. military-might. These beliefs and respect

enforce their perspectives that international affairs and the U.S.'s standing as a world power remains important.

Locally Actives: The Political World and Our Small Role in It

Three student participants demonstrated very little interest in the formal political processes of democracy. Given their academic major, I found this surprising, but their stories are compelling. They demonstrate that having a limited interest in the political system is not the same as a lack of interest in the condition of, or one's involvement in, their community. Profiles of Bert, Nate, and Sharon compose the Locally Actives Group. These students represent the greatest diversity of geographical origins and include the one person of color who participated in the study. Like Dewey (International-Status Oriented) and Amanda (Domestic-Politics Oriented), Bert is from a small town in Northern Maine, but unlike Dewey or Amanda, the Relevant Issue for Bert is the recent decline his hometown has experienced. Nate, from a middle-class bedroom community in South-Central Maine, likes participating in what he referred to as "practical politics." Finally, Sharon is from Philadelphia. During our conversations, she detailed the acculturation she experienced in moving from an urban area to a quite rural one, and said she wants to move back to "an urban area – I think I've have enough of a small town."

Bert: Maybe I'll just move to Canada

The three Locally Active participants pay little attention either to the international aspect of politics or the intranational political gamesmanship of the two major parties. The attention Bert does pay frustrates him and drives him toward third party politics. The northern and eastern two thirds of the state have been systematically economically crippled over the last three decades, and during this current recession, Maine is feeling an even deeper loss of jobs. The population center of the state is moving southward, toward the seacoast

and the border with New Hampshire and beyond that, metropolitan Boston (Tuttle, 2003).

Among the participants, Bert provided a unique if historical perspective, reflecting that

> Maine played a reasonable big role in [the Civil War] – there were actually people and businesses here at the time. That mid-section history of the United States ... but after the railroads went down, lumber's kind of scaled back, this place has really dried up. Brownville and Milo used to have two separate schools, but now it's just Milo, and Milo's going to be consolidating with some other people. Milo used to be surrounded by railroad towns; it was like the central point. Now it's just Milo. All the mills are closing. Everybody's wondering what they're doing. But I know I'm not staying – that's fairly obvious.

Bert is alternatively optimistic and worried. While he was describing his frustration with the current economic downturn and expressing a low sense of political efficacy, he stated, "maybe I'll just move to Canada." He elucidated,

> I'm just a little mad, everything. I don't see it getting better. I think the damage is done to this economy, it's permanent. I think we'll recover over the long term, but for now, I don't think there is a lot we can do. We can't do much.
>
> The world is getting smaller and we're not doing much about that. The world is really getting smaller as time goes by. Communications and transportation, it's improved. We can't really be isolationists anymore, and it seems like that's what we're trying to go back to. ...the bygone days. It's too late. I'm looking through the past, where we've been, what we've done. We're not making any progress.

In an interesting switch of focus from the local economic situation to an interest in environmental policy, Bert demonstrated some of his internal dissonance:

> I don't think we're taking positive steps, the way we're going. Places like Maine are hurting. Maine is suffering a little right now – the paper mills are going under, but on the other side of it, the rivers will clean up in a while. A positive step would be anything that brings us in ... in a different direction, because right now it seems like we don't have one. The Kyoto Accords would have been okay. Preserving the Alaskan Refuse from oil drilling is a good idea.

Nate: Local Governance is Thankless, Practical, and Emotively Rewarding

Nate does not think like his classmates. He rejects the premise upon which he believes his classmates' political perspectives are supported, that they and other citizens "identify nationally and those are the types of themes they are looking for, on the national level, but I think it's just as important to look at [cultural and local issues]." Eventually relating his frustration over a book assigned to, and discussed in, a classroom setting, Nate said that,

> to be honest, I just feel like ... I feel ignorant of [national and international political] issues. I mean, they'll bring up some things that I had a) never heard of before, or b) just wasn't well enough informed to debate with the people in the class about.
>
> [Because my classmates are so focused on national political gamesmanship] there are some issues that I think are overlooked ... community-based programs and local civic participation, things like that. I don't think they look enough at it at the local level and as community-based participation. That sort of stuff really interests me. That's the type of debate I could really get into but it seems that class ... they, I mean, when we're talking about [an assigned] book, they're all, "oh, that's crap. He didn't bring up his views on politics at all." and I said I think it's pretty obvious [he was] talking about those types of levels of political participation.

He has a strong desire to work for a local authority, to be a city manager, or to administer a service or good on a local level. He described himself as

> a behind-the-scenes guy. I'd love to be able to ... in fact, I think I mentioned it last time ... to be the guy who knows he's done something good and put somebody in office, who can do some good and still have done the work. I'd feel good about that. I've got no need for recognition. People just don't recognize all the behind-the-scenes things that go on in a local government, and the ... I guess I could come to terms with that fact, the underrecognition, maybe.
>
> It almost feels a little bit better. I'm not exactly a boastful person. I consider myself a little bit humble, anyways. To be able to just have that side of you, that would be great. To know that you made a difference, and you don't have to take recognition, that almost feels a little bit better. And at the same time, people, or even if, maybe something went on ... say there's an emergency, a crisis, and you're

> working in public administration or as a local official and you solve it before it gets to the public, you can sort of recognize that, and recognize the good it did, and recognize the good it did for the people not to recognize it, to have seen it. That kind of feels pretty good, the unsung hero kind of thing.

To emphasize this aspect of his character, Nate described a sports-related story from his

> [senior year in] high school .... There was a freshman coming up and ... there was this meet, and it didn't matter. I knew I was going to go to the regional tournament, then to the state tournament. It just happened to be against a kid that I hadn't beaten all year. It was the only kid that I had losses from, and he was just an amazing kid, good talent. And it seem like I was letting him wrestle because I didn't want another loss to everybody else, but I knew [this teammate] just wanted to get in there, he had a fire in his heart. He didn't care if he lost in the first five seconds of the match to this kid. I let him wrestle; I let him take my place for the varsity squad. For a lot of people, it was like, "oh, Nate's copping out," but I knew I was just trying to give [this teammate] a chance.

This mixture of a preference for working behind the scenes and a selfless desire to help others brings Nate to an unexpected choice of career track. He reflected,

> I used to have desires to be a staffer for a U.S. Senator, or to clerk for a Supreme Court justice, you know what I mean. But the more I see it, the more I think about it, the more I feel that I can make a bigger difference at the local level. That is what interests me for a career.

Thus, rather than political science, Nate expects to establish a career utilizing "my minor of public administration." He believes that

> one trademark I've always strived for is just a good work ethic. You should work hard regardless of whether you are being successful. Or whether or not you've totally grasped the subject. If you strive hard for it, then you've done enough.

Nate then moves on to the esteem, the behind-the-scenes, under-appreciated roles of local and

> state politics, state government. [It] kind of interests me more these days than the high-paced world of maybe Washington or something like that. It's lower – it's like you're at the right level, at a more direct

> level. You can really see the work that you do there, that it can effect people rather than institutions, maybe.
>
> [Being] involved in local or state politics, I think, it's one of the most under-appreciated jobs in life. I've always kind of felt like the political life would be something I would be interested in ... trying to actually make a difference. If I do work in local government and I'm not recognized for it, it'll still be all right because I know in the end that what I'm doing does make a difference.

This sense of being underappreciated provides some perspective to Nate's thoughts about running for public office. He demonstrated both an aspect of having limited expectations of his abilities and a fear of scrutiny when he considered running. He explained,

> I have no desire to run for any high, public office. I suppose if I find myself getting very involved and I get a large enough base of support wherever I'm working, the highest type of office I suppose would ever run for would be like a State Senator. But I've got no desire to put in the time and the effort that it takes to campaign.
>
> And I've always felt like you put yourself out there so much, for scrutiny, for all those things that come along the campaign trail. And running for office, I don't, I'm not sure if it's worth it for that. You know, city managers get a lot of heat. They live pretty public lives. A lot of times, often, they are scrutinized for their private life, or even their decisions in office. I've thought a lot about that as well. But that's the main thing, being scrutinized so heavily. And I suppose the money, too; running for office. It just turns me off of it.

Sharon: Generalized Reciprocity within her Community

Sharon presented substantial differences between herself and the other participants. This difference existed in several respects. She was the only person of color, was the only person from an urban center, and was one of three students who are not from Maine. In Chapter Two, the notion of generalized reciprocity was introduced as an important – in fact, a requisite – characteristic of social capital (Baker, 2000; Putnam, 1993, 1995b, 2000; Wuthnow, 1994). Generalized reciprocity is the aspect of social networks in which the community cares for its members, and incorporates a theory that offering good will and good works to members of the network entitles those same members to assistance when in

need. The reciprocity is generalized, because those who return the favors are not necessarily the same person toward whom one was first kind. Sharon has enjoyed a lifetime of witnessing generalized reciprocity. She recognizes the church in which she in a member as the foundation and the source of her sense of community.

> I feel like I am one of the few. From my neighborhood, I may be the only one who went to college. I didn't make it here by myself: my church, my family, my friends, people – there are definitely people all along who have helped me, a lot, like more than any average person would have done, so I owe them something. If it's only to go back and give freely of myself to somebody else, I owe them something. But me, I'll do what I can to help them. So whatever it is in my power to do, they'll benefit from it.
>
> My freshman year, by the end of the first semester I owed like $2000, and ... I called my church, and a couple of women in my church.... I called home and said, I don't know what I'm going to do. I can't come home, and they were like [affect becomes very flat], "don't worry about it. We'll handle it."
>
> One of the ladies cashed in, like, a savings bond that she had and sent me the $2000. Where does that come from? I'm not one of her children. She has no tie to me; she has no obligation to me. She has kids of her own and it's not like she's rich. You know what I mean?

Sharon was the least "political" person in the study. She is not interested in a conventional political career. Like three Domestic-Political participants, she is considering going to law school. Sharon said she has wanted to be a lawyer "since [she] was about eight years old," and would use that training and the credentials it conveys to be a social justice advocate. She

> chose political science because it's the closest thing to pre-law. The fact is that I didn't really enjoy a lot of my political science classes. ... I don't know what it is. I get bored easily, I guess it is, so it's like "this isn't important." I don't know if the subject...I could care less. I could care less about some of the things going on in the world. Studying things that are far away...it doesn't interest me. I'm more of a here-and-now. Let's solve the problems of today.
>
> My first goal is to work with juveniles and the criminal justice system, because I really think... the statistics, the stories on the news,

> juveniles going to jail for life. It makes me I want to do that. Eventually, one day my hope is to work at a non-profit organization-type of thing, support groups, and stuff like that, and maybe one day, an office.
>
> I've thought about social work, but as a lawyer, you have some prestige, some status, you have a bigger base to talk to. One of my aunts is a social worker, and she is like "don't do it." You really can't change much. You see these individuals, and you really just tell them "yes" or "no" to benefits, and that's all you really get to do. She told me that if you really want to want to make some changes you're going to have to go into politics or stick with what you're doing and be a lawyer.

Sharon credits members in the church for fostering the sense of community she easily expresses. Speaking of the woman who helped her with her college bills, and with the other contributors she knows, Sharon said,

> she knows me, knows that I was a good kid, and my whole church is like, whatever you need. It's just like that – don't worry about it. I could call her tomorrow and say I need open-heart surgery, and they would find the money. It's like that for most of the kids [in the church]. Once you are a child ... once you are in there, you are in there. You can come back after twenty years of never seeing anybody, and you're still, you're still embraced.
>
> A couple of people from my church – a couple of women in my church, they had always been like, they basically had me on a weekly allowance. Whenever I would see them at church, they would slip me like $5 or $10, and stuff like that. They really like me – as a person, too, I guess. I have a whole church, a whole community, a whole city, pushing me. I work well under pressure, so it's not that bad.

In addition to feeling the support and obligation to her community, Sharon contributes her efforts to two causes. Both are, on their face, congruent with Sharon, her community, her value of community, and her evolved identity. She is first involved with Alternative Spring Break, which she values for the opportunity she has to help people in other cities. Importantly, the group also will

> do service on the weekend, to show kind of what it's going to be like when we get to our site. [Recently] we worked with Main View Apartments ... it's like an elderly complex. Basically, we just helped

> them clean. We told them there is no reason to thank us, but the lady kept hugging me and kissing me, and it was...she was saying "I'm going to write you a letter." I just do it because I like it, I love being active. I like to just do things.

Alternative Spring Break, or ASB, supports Sharon's other assumed obligation. She continued,

> every year we do diversity training at the ASB retreat. That's because we take people to places they've never been. A lot of our trips, the kids have never left Maine. We're taking them to New Orleans, Atlanta, D.C. They are going to see people that are very much unlike themselves.
>
> Last year, one of the girls who is an officer this year, she was telling a story, she is from one of the Northern towns in Maine. The K-Mart, they do this program, it's K-Mart cares for kids, but all the "Cs" are "Ks": It's "K-Mart Kares for..." like "K.K.K." when you're looking at it from the highway. She was saying, "I wonder how the colored people feel about that."
>
> So, all the Black kids in the cafeteria, we were all sitting in the corner, and we all got up together and reminded her that that's not the PC term. But what's great is she really did want to learn. So this year, when she told the same story again, she left that part out. It's the little things, that one person. That's just one of the many cool things.

Finally, Sharon's success and interest in teaching others of diversity and her culture specifically are not limited to Alternative Spring Break. She continued:

> I was the president of Black Student Union. [One day] were talking about why majority peoples don't feel they are welcome at events that we plan at like the Black Student Union or for the Latin group or the Japanese Student Association. A lot of them, when we say something, they say, "I didn't know it was for me." So now myself and a couple of other people, we're on a personal crusade, we're like, "no, this is for you." The point of the group is to diversify the campus.
>
> How can we diversify [the campus] if it's just us? There's only 72 black kids on this campus. If we did everything for just ourselves, it would be silly. Then of that 72, only like five are committed to doing things. There is just a level of apathy at this campus; that just kills me. It gets kind of frustrating, when you see things like that. People put so much effort into the things that they do, and when nobody comes...

> It hurts when people are like, "oh, that's not for me." Why not!? It starts with a dialogue. You have to talk to people before they'll understand. It takes that campus dialogue. We try to do like panel discussions, and open forums. People still don't come. It's like an unwillingness to learn. I have issues. Even people who've known me for years don't understand exactly what the Black Student Union does or what Alternative Spring Break does, and I have to explain it, "this is what we really do," or "this is what we want."

Locally Actives' Views on Domestic Political Issues

I asked Bert to define politics. He told me, "politics, it's how we get things done." About politics, he opined,

> at the moment, we're making our decision without looking, it seems, at the long term. Part of my time here in college has been spent kind of being ashamed to be an American. Terrible crap going down. [We've given] too much to the moderates. I don't think I want anything extreme, but the Democrats have gone so far to the center, I just want something that is vaguely Democratic. I'm just looking for someone who won't sell out our national parks to companies, to corporate sponsors. They don't really support much of that anymore. My first election, what, between Clinton and Dole, I voted for Clinton. Clinton was okay. In 1996, he won easily so it wasn't that big of deal. He wasn't impressive, but he was alright.

Expounding on his belief that too much attention is given to macro-level politics, Nate suggested that people should be more savvy about local issues, even though

> it's tough to get people to understand, to understand complications, like the budget. Some people don't know about it. Not everybody's an accountant; not everybody is experienced in how the government works in those areas. Something like what's going on in education, Medicare reform, people don't understand what's going on. And so, when you have something like that, it's really confusing. I don't understand it, most people don't. They have a basic idea of what it means to be involved, care about it. It's not as easy for them to be involved, to understand.

The defining characteristic of this group is the extent to which they have withdrawn from formalized, political participation. This withdrawl does not mean they are not political, uninvolved, or uninformed. Bert shares characteristics of Doppelt and Shearer's (1999) "Alienated" citizens. He votes, he reads the papers, but he feels that he and his community

have been left behind. Sharon better fits the "Don't Knows" group (ibid), and has withdrawn from nearly all formal political action. She is involved, however, in education about race and community service. Nate is the most politically active of the three, having worked for municipal government and having career aspirations that include city management. Still, he admitted to feeling less interested in national politics than his class cohort.

Domestic-Political Oriented Group: Participation is Congruent with Citizenship

The final cluster of participants is the half of the volunteers who share a focus on conventional and orthodox political experiences and an orientation to favor domestic politics. These students share similar motivations, political approaches, and demographic characteristics, including well-defined senses of community originating from their hometown experiences, and having up parents who are professional, who have contributed to this sense of community, and who have contributed to the political awareness and ideology of the students. Of these five students, two are registered independents, one a Republican, and two are Democrats. While registered as a Democrat, Jack – like Bert, a Locally Active – finds the Party not nearly liberal enough for him.

Among the commonalities in this group is that they all have enjoyed privilege, and each reflected on that privilege in our conversations. They have come to balance that privilege with a developing sense of need for social justice. Each student located their support in one particular cause or form of action. Amanda is a budding advocate for children and women. Her undergraduate honors thesis is on women's leadership, and her data were secured from elected women in the Maine State Legislature. Robb and Ryan participate in local fundraisers such as the MS Walk, and Jack would "be happy working for civil rights law, immigration law, race or women's rights, universal freedom, whatever. Just

being part of a movement, a progressive thing going on." The fifth student, Sarah, has some traditional political experiences, but political awareness for her occurs through arguing with friends and in the development of a viewpoint about the role in a democracy of the fourth estate.

Domestic-Political participants describe views of international affairs that are tempered by the effect of U.S. International actions on our internal integrity. For example, Sarah was concerned about the U.S.'s international relationships:

> I really think the biggest thing [about our attack on Iraq] is it sets a very, very bad precedent for a preemptive strike, and the United Nations is going to need to rebuild itself without the United States. I'm not sure that can be done. And the United States is either going to have to try to find a way to promote its interests without military actions, or become isolationists, again. It's going to be a very difficult process. Why was that not an option for us? Would it have symbolized we had backed down?

When Ryan answered my question about current affairs, he quipped,

> apparently all that is going on in the world right now is Iraq. Which is ... to me ... my feeling is it kind of illustrates American's apathy toward politics, and the misunderstanding, no, the ... not really caring enough to find out what's really going on. People don't realize what else is going on in the world. We don't recognize at all how destitute some people are, or that the state's budgets are suffering at an extraordinary rate. The states are having to cut programs left-and-right to cope with budget deficits.

A commonality among these five participants is represented by statements from four of these students. It seemed those students anticipated my desire for political ambitious student, and each recognized they lacked that level of ambition. Jack told me, "I'm not exactly a traditional student, not even sure I'm what you are looking for," while Sarah stated,

> you might find me to be an anomaly in your research of political science majors. I'm not really that involved in party politics or in electoral politics. I think that I find the most meaning in arguing politics with other people.

Likewise, Ryan said,

> I'm probably not your typical POS major. I didn't choose it because I was interested in politics or political science as a career or anything else like that. I was looking for something liberal arts. It was something that seemed like studying, even if I didn't use it for my career, it would help me in the course of my life to understand, what's going on. This one just struck my fancy. I kind of chose it because it's fun to study. It's broad enough. I like the professors I've had here already. I just kind of stayed with it.

Meanwhile, Robb suggested a desire for a broad education:

> when I came here, I just wanted to major in Liberal Arts, I'm big on liberal arts, but I found out you can't declare just Liberal Arts as a major. I like to be around it, I really liked my English classes, things like that. I like to be well-rounded. I think that's what an undergraduate education is for.

Amanda: Studying women leadership – Seeking role models

The first two student profiled shared their experience of interning for Susan Collins, one of Maine's U.S. Senators, both in her Bangor office and in Washington, D.C. It became obvious to me that even though they are thinking about resuming their work for the Senator once they graduate, it is unlikely either will do so. Amanda has

> talked with the Collin's office a little bit. I've had an offer to go back to Washington, but ... moving to a new city isn't really what I want to do. I think doing things with the state offices will let me do the things I like. I've interned with the state offices.

She says she is "sort of going back-and-forth between ... applying to law schools for next fall." While she is on that "law school path ... pretty committed," she is struggling with wanting to be an advocate for social change while facing a belief that

> if I worked hard through three years of law school, made those sacrifices, worked hard in a firm, and all that – I'd sort of feel, like you're entitled to – not the big paycheck, but the lifestyle, you know. You work hard for ... to be able to have a big house or a nice car. I'm interested in education law but I think in order to live the way I would like to live, I'll have to do some sort of money-making law.
>
> I sort of have this idea I'd work at a firm for a while, pay off the debts from law school, get the house, and be comfortable. Then I would like to move into, I think, children's advocacy is an area that has a

> strong need for competent representation. Or women. I have some friends whose mothers have gone through divorce. It seems that mothers get the short end of the stick on that. Some people would say I have bitterness toward men and I guess that explains some of my feminist views. I think that women and children – it's not just women – anybody who is underrepresented, or who has a need of an advocate is where I'd like to end up in law. I know I could come out of law school, do that, and live a fine lifestyle, but it just there are other things I'd like to pursue, once that I ... it sounds selfish once you say it out loud. It seems selfish to think I'd want to take care of everything else first, and then ...

In addition to seeking an answer about her purpose, Amanda is weighing her commitment to family life. For her, this is "a huge family consideration. I'm very close with my parents; I've got both sets of grandparents living just down the street. I like the fact [we live in] a smaller, friendlier community." It is not only her current family structure that she considers, though. She adds,

> I want to have a career, and I'm not interested right now in having a family, but I'm sure that will change, as I get a little bit older. It's hard to think, at 21 or 22, about how these choices are going to impact, I guess, the long run. I don't feel that I have to choose whether I want to be really career-focused, or if I want to pursue more of a family role. I do know that that comes into consideration. There's some trade-offs that needs to be made as far as law school, and once you get out in a firm and you're working. [Those] trade offs [are part of the] bigger picture of life. They don't necessarily leave a lot of time for a traditional female role, being a mother, taking that time. I don't know.
>
> I'm reading a book by two women lawyers, about the tradeoffs some women will make – they'll take the time off – and how that effects their career. They might not ever make partner, or it might take fifteen years instead of the seven or eight it takes most people.

Women in leadership

Gilligan (1982) asserted "when identity and intimacy converge in dilemmas of conflicting commitment, the relationship between self and other is exposed. That this relationship differs in the experience of men and women is a steady theme..." (p. 156). Parks Daloz's, et al. (1996) suggested the concept of the "new commons," one aspect of

which is complexity. Amanda's experiences with gender issues and leadership is apparent, in the context of her understanding her thesis topic and in her re-presentation of her parents' views. Speaking of the U.S. Senator's leadership, she reflected,

> I don't have any male benchmark to compare it to, I think anyone in that sort of a position, be it a Senator, full time positions, I think you have to be very focused, very direct. I've worked for Senator Collins, thought she was impressive, how she goes about things. We would joke around that it was all work and no play Tuesdays through Thursdays when she was in town, but Mondays and Fridays were a little more relaxed. That's how I got into the whole women's aspect. I respect that these women have made the choices they've made. Senator Collins isn't married. She doesn't have a traditional family life. People say that she has a lot of close friends ... I guess that's a choice that she's made. More power to her. I respect that.

Amanda described three elements as central to women leading or contributing in the workplace. These elements have a social context more than a political one. The first is the conflict between family obligations and career. Continuing her thoughts noted above, Amanda suggested,

> there's a trade-off that women make. How that effects careers – families and careers – how they put them together. We talked about how sometimes women tend to get involved in politics at more of an issues-level, a certain issue will spark interest, one they will feel really strongly about. That sort of opens the door; you find out – I've had a lot of success lobbying, well, not lobbying, but getting people to vote or educate people to vote for a particular issue. They're more apt; they think maybe I can run for the school board. Maybe I can be an effective city councilor. That kind of pipeline is how women get in the system and get going, versus sometimes men will do that, get involved, thinking why not?, because my father did it.

Amanda's father plays a large role in this gender identity process. She described a classroom experience where the class was

> talking about primary childcare giver and secondary caregiver. And I was saying to mom, "I'm going to tell dad when he gets home that he's the secondary care giver." She said, "he's touchy. He doesn't like to think of himself ... he would like to think it is equal." But, you know, he was the Adult Education Director when I was growing up, he had PTA/PTO meetings for the two or three schools he was

> principal of. He has a ... he worked on his Masters degree, so there were a lot of evenings he was away from home, and mom was home with my brother and me. So, would I say she didn't have the same opportunity at that time to pursue Masters' work? Yeah. I know if she had wanted to, they would have done something, but, you know, he was the one that was out there, pursuing it. She was home.

Another element Amanda is working to identify within her view of women in leadership is the perception of women in the world, especially those who are strong.

> Something else that's interesting to me is people's perceptions of women being very direct, very powerful; it comes off a little differently than a man has those same sort of personality attributes. She's "mean," or "bitchy," either one, because of how she acts. I think you have to act that way, maybe take on more similar, more "male" traits, more "male" ways of doing things to get your work done.
>
> I think people – some would – say I am a little bossy, a little, um, task-oriented. I think it is important to frame things by using the words that you choose. I don't have any problems with stepping up or speaking up. And I respect that.

A third characteristic of women's leadership Amanda suggested is her own perception of women that is completely freed from gender identity roles, a freedom she is not eager to claim. She attributed a quote to

> Margaret Chase Smith, the first woman senator from Maine. She came right out and said, "I was never a woman senator; I was never a woman politician. I did my job as a human."

Of herself, Amanda suggested,

> I sort of have always considered myself pretty ... women's lib, pretty out there, well, not out there. I've quickly learned that I'm a lot more conservative with those views than I had originally thought. There were a lot of real strong women's studies majors. I've seen more ... I can understand where they're coming from, but I'm not as into that militant, that militant feminism. I think that it is, and I don't feel ... I don't want to take away from anything that they're really interested in, really powerful for.
>
> I don't feel like I'm being disloyal to feminism, when I sort of accept or make part of my life, some of these more traditional feminine things. You know, the middle ground. Compromise. Things like that.

> I think it's all well and good, and I'm not into spelling "women" with the "y." I guess I'm all about ... if you have the skills or the talent, if you can compete with a man. I don't want any woman to be discriminated against or not given the same equal options, but on the other hand, I don't want to be put ahead of somebody else, somebody maybe more qualified, just because I'm female. That's kind of how I feel. Equal opportunity. Give me the same options if I'm qualified but I don't want to be given something that, maybe, I don't deserve, just because of my sex. I don't think that all the feminists out there – I think that a lot of people would share my feelings but I think somehow the movement has been a little bit misinterpreted. Everybody has a different take on how – everybody wants the same thing. But I just don't want any extra help that I don't deserve, or that women don't deserve. Not that we're not deserving.

According to Davies (1989, 1993), young children understand quickly and clearly that the world divided into male and female. This "male–female dualism" (Davies, 1989, 1993) or "gender dichotomy" (Francis, 1998, 1999) socializes children to conform to dress code, behaviors, and other visual signs that present visible differences between girls and boys (Francis, 2002). Amanda demonstrated the complexity of gender roles, opining,

> I'm not a person who is offended if a male holds the door open. I don't feel that it is in my face. I'm not into the whole bra-burning, not shaving. I'm not one of those "I don't need any of the man's restrictions on me" women. I'm pretty, I'm cute, I was a cheerleader in high school. I color my hair, I get in a tanning bed. I like all of those things but also I was also class president and a varsity soccer player. I have just as much interest in those things as I do the girly stuff. I like both, and I guess I don't have any trouble mixing.
>
> I respect somebody who fills the traditional mother-and-wife role. I don't know how they juggle it. I don't know when they find time to sleep, given everything that they do.

Robb: Conventional Political Involvement Now, but Who Knows What Later?

Political participation for Robb appears orthodox, but he presented several paradoxes. I met Robb, who I knew worked at the local office of the Republican U.S. Senator for the state, when he walked into the Memorial Union carrying a book of Martin Luther King speeches. As we talk, I hear him suggest a wide-berth view of politics, that

"politics is everything, down to what you buy, where you shop." He explains the King book, noting that he is finishing a presentation about the value, the influence that political protests can have, although he is "not too big on protesting. I'd rather be out doing something more constructive." He suggested the demonstrations against the war against Iraq could be more productive if

> those million people sent away for absentee ballots, filled them out right there, for whoever the Democratic, just the Democratic checkbox, and threw them on the lawn, that would... He remembers Florida. [Bush] knows he only won by 530 votes.
>
> That's the most important part about politics, that people understand it. If you're going to have that belief that marching is going to change something, you have to know the person that you're marching to get their attention. It's more just about understanding politics.

For Robb, politics and service are family-socialized traits. He "grew up, actually, on a [U.S. military] base in Germany," but reflected on his

> uncle, who owns a bakery, [just as] his uncle owned it. It's in our town since 1913, something. Every morning, everyone from the city council, the mayor; everyone's just in the back, drinking coffee. That's where things get done. I grew up around that.
>
> My great uncle who used to own it, never went to college, but he was on the city council for many years. He was the mayor, he ran the hospital for a while, he was an administrator at the hospital. That's where it started. Everyone would go there to see what he had to say. Now the tradition has continued, everyone gets there and talks between five and seven in the morning. When you see politics get done like that, on a one-to-one basis, it's sort of refreshing.
>
> I think [that American democracy] our system works. I think that while it might not be perfect, it might need some fixing, it works. I've always been interested in politics.

The aspect of helping, the role of government as a resource for helping people, runs strong for Robb. Over this last year of school, he has worked with a United States Senator, in her Washington office and in her local office. He said,

> I did an internship this summer in D.C. for eight weeks [for Senator Collins] Then, I was looking for a part time job up here [and someone I knew] said that I should work at the office, just a couple of days a weeks. I thought that sounded nice. I work there 8:00 – 6:00 on Tuesday and Thursdays. On the Tuesdays and Thursdays when I go into the office – it's a long day, like 10 hours – but I leave and feel like I've done some people some good things.
>
> Doing constituent work is unpoliticized. You're helping someone get out of the homeless shelter, someone who can't pay the heat. What I enjoy most at work aren't the politics of it, it's the helping people through the government because I think there are a lot of things the government can do that people don't realize that, but the government can help with. But it definitely seems like the government is there for the people.
>
> For a while, I was pre-med, I thought I wanted to be a family practitioner, do a doctors-without-borders sort of thing. That's why I've enjoyed politics more, or a political job more that I'm actually helping people on a daily basis. I don't think I want to serve in office, where all I have to do is come up with sound bites. For a while I thought that might be what I wanted to do. In the scope of things, it doesn't feel like you help people on a one-on-one basis, and that's what I want to do.

Jack: Woodsman, Naturalist, Progressive

I met Jack at the student union. He walked in wearing flannel and work pants, boots, and thick dreadlocks that are waist long. These locks serve as part of his identity – it is, in fact, the way he told me I would recognize him. About these locks, he said

> I had this great afro when I was in high school. And I loved that afro. It was big. By the time I was a senior, had it all [motions around head].... That summer after I graduated from high school, I fought the dreadlocks, and they just came on. There was no stopping them. It was either cut the hair or let them go over to dreadlocks, and they just kind of kept going. I don't know, the dreads just kind of popped in one day, and I don't know, I've had 'em for eight years now. I didn't really have any control over them.
>
> It's not a Rastafarian thing. It's not a religious thing. The longer they got, the more beautiful women would come up and ask to touch my hair. I am a lover of women above all things. I just love the fact that they like to play with the hair. When guys are giving me a hard time about it, that's my first comeback. I don't pick up girls, I don't go out with dates. Other people seem to like them more than I do.

Jack idealizes the fierce independence with which New Englanders like to imbue themselves. He lives in a cabin without electricity and he spends his summers working for the National Forest Service fighting fires in the American West and in Alaska. He describes his political beliefs as

> I'm definitively a liberal, well, I don't even like the term "liberal." If some of the liberals who are calling themselves liberals get to call themselves that, then I think I'm off the map.

What I most appreciated about Jack was his perspective on progress within our society. He is eager for more progress, to be sure, but he described a long-view approach.

> I love Rousseau, reading his second discourse. I love it, it's great. I mean, he's full of crap, he's way off the mark. But it's 1752, and nobody's come up with an idea like that. I also think of Ayn Rand, who writes about the virtue of capitalism. I don't get why she's there. She seems too progressive in life, yet mired in her admiration of capitalism, not just a financial structure but a socio-political one.
>
> All these things that obviously have their place in history, if we took Rousseau's idea of progressive history. There is a progressiveness that you can't, you don't, go back on. From the enlightenment on, you know, radicals used to be the ones saying "you can't own another person." Now, there isn't even a conservative in this country who would stand up and publicly say you can't do that.
>
> But that used to be the most radical of ideas. It's no longer a radical idea. A radical idea held now is, maybe, some far-left radical idea about the World Bank, or you can't impose these things over other countries just because you think you have a security issue. That's radical now. And things have sped up so much over the last fifty years or so. It doesn't take the time it used to take. Ten or twenty years from now, that could be a commonly held idea. You have these little pendulum swings back and forth, a Republican presidencies, or a conservative this, or a conservative that. But I think we are progressively moving in a direction. Serfdom ends, then slavery ends, then those serfs and slaves get the right to vote, women get the right to vote. And they're civil liberties and civil rights. There is a movement, a progressive thing going on, and capitalism has a place in that.
>
> But I think that universal human, well, the basic pretext of enlightenment thinking. That humans have self determination, they

> should be allowed to think because they are capable of thought. So they should be allowed to make up their own minds.

Jack believes that the Patriot Act (2001) and other changes in the law, championed by Attorney General Ashcroft and the Bush Administration, are dangerous. He suggested,

> we have an idea of state philosophy – the way that you used to have state religion. You can't speak ... it feels like, in the last few year, you can't say ... there's a state idea of what being an American is, all these things, and that outside that is scary or bad. The phrase, "You are either with us or without us?" What kind of stupid idea is that? There isn't a varying shade of grey anywhere?

Finally, about his career choices, he said, "it's tough for me to focus down and figure out what I want to do. I've got all, all these broad issues that I think about." His immediate plans could include law school or returning to work in the Western forests, because he

> really like[s] fighting fires and digging in the dirt. I'll make a better wage doing that than, I think, I mean... coming out of law school I'll be able to make some money, but with a bachelors' degree from here, there's no way I can make as much money as I can fighting fires.

However, he described that his

> dream is to, is ... I went to the mountain school in Vermont. It's an off-shoot of Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts, you know, big name. It's in Berkshire, like 40 miles northwest of White River Junction. It's nice, it's beautiful, it's 140 acres of farm. Forty-four students go there for one semester at a time. So everybody's there, fall of 1994, my senior year, and it was great. It's the most academically challenging school I've ever been to, college or otherwise. I've never worked as hard academically. But it's also a working, organic farm. They supply all their own food.
>
> There's another school at the Maine Coast, near Bowdoin. It's actually a sister school to the Mountain school. I was skiing around my neighbor's place yesterday – he's go like 300 acres, down near Penobscot – right on the back of the land is the river. I was just dreaming about owning this guy's property. I could build a nice school there – it's just a fantastic place, that property. It could make a great experience, intellectual. The mountain school's where I started farming and started cutting. I started my chainsaw career. I've made more money with that chainsaw; that thing'll do anything. That thing is awesome. That's what I would love to do – what a pipe dream.

Being of Use

Jack stated the tolerance he observes in New Englanders is grounded in the value of work, and he appreciates both judging other people's character and being judged on the merits of work. Of those

> old Yankees, like my grandparents, if you can work and you're worth a damn, they don't care. They are the most unprejudiced people you can find. They won't like you if you're lazy, no matter what you are.
>
> See, I grew up in New England, too. My mother's side, both are old New Englanders, and my dad's side, new New Englanders. I always, you know, the use thing that goes around New England, you know, "be-of-use." You have to do something that is of use. Before going to college, before I went to Alaska, I worked on farms. I was a farmer. I really liked that. There's a really great way of being-of-use. There is no more pure way to be-of-use than to feed people. To feed people is the easiest way to provide for them.
>
> I grew up with a lot of these people, we've known a lot of them growing up. I've worked on farms a lot, I've worked with a lot of these guys. They are in their eighties, nineties now, and I find that they are not, they're more populist more than anything. I find that it holds true for a lot of things. I mean, Maine doesn't have a lot of racism problems, but, you know, there's not a lot of Black people, either.

Sarah: "I really just want a job"

About to graduate, Sarah has a little bit of practical experiences in government or in political campaigning. While studying political science, Sarah completed an

> internship with the state government last summer. I really couldn't find a political job other than the state government internship, and quite honestly it didn't pay well at all. I'll probably take what I can get.

In middle school, Sarah engaged in door-to-door campaigning for a third party candidate, a candidate who later morally betrayed her.

> I was a sophomore in high school. My friend's father was a campaign manager for the Green Party for governor. I wasn't really all that passionate about the campaign to begin with, I guess. I didn't research [the candidate's] views very well. She came to our class and spoke to us once, and she was the only candidate that did that, and

> that had something to do with it. For a couple of days, I went out with my friend and handed out pamphlets, door-to-door, and talked about her platform. A couple of years later [the candidate] got picked up for drunk driving. That was the last political involvement that I participated in.

Orthodox political behavior is not of strong interest to Sarah right now. She described her most common political activity is debating or arguing with her friends. She observed,

> I'm a competitive person by nature. [Debating becomes] a competition thing. Some of it is to see who's right and who's wrong. I guess it helps everyone to solidify their views. We honestly think that each other's views are wrong. I don't know if it's really an issue of substituting a party's view for your own, or if it's about disagreeing with one view so much that you by default agree with the other. Yeah, I think they are trying to convince me; at the same time, I'm trying to convince them, of course. And I think a lot of people are just...and I'm just reciprocating, when I hear them say my views are wrong.

Although she defines her identify through this debate-oriented participation, Sarah has placed a moratorium on arguing with

> my best friend [who] is a very, very conservative person. I have known him since I was in first grade. A typical scenario is when one of us mentions something political, in the past, the other would say, "I disagree..." We say why, get into this extremely heated argument. And the step back and ask "why are we arguing? We're friends and that's not important to the friendship."
>
> I don't think our friendship is effected at all by political views, it's effected by how well and how long we've known each other and what we have in common outside of that. The reason we decided to stop talking about those issues is because we weren't respecting each other's views, when we talked about it. But there are lots of values that [we] share that are not political, things like home and life or family values. I'm friends with him because he knows me so well.

Among her career interests, she is considering working in arts administration, a field she recognizes has political overtones and requires its occupants to have political awareness and savvy. She laments that while she has thoughts of working with the promotion of the

> arts. Unfortunately, arts are not a priority in most government budgets. I would have a hard time getting paid for it [although, during my internship], former Governor King gave a speech at one of our seminars. He talked about the arts as economic stimulus, that there is this new philosophy that industry and educated people will flock to places that are good places to live. If we encourage the arts then we will encourage, by default, industry.

While her political ideology, particularly on social issues, is progressive, Sarah is registered

> as an independent. That means I'm allowed to change my views to what I believe is right rather than some political agenda that some other people are trying to create. I think that I can identify with a lot of different aspects of different parties. And it allows me that freedom of choice. Part of it also is that as a political scientist who wants a political job, I think as soon as I choose a party, I'm limiting myself to 50% of the field.

This reluctance to vote for or work within one of the two established political parties stems from, she confessed, a

> struggle with the definitions of liberalism and conservatism in this country. I think in each party there is a big contradiction in how they come up with their agendas, with their ideals. For instance, conservatives would like to have economic freedom but they would also like to limit the ... this may not be accurate, but freedom of speech. They tend to be more inclined toward censorship than liberal parties. It seems kind of odd to me, that the ... talk about Republican politics, you have these people who don't trust the government, they want it to be smaller, they want to eliminate the Department of Education, they don't want it interfering in the everyday lives of ordinary citizens, and yet they have this ... solid trust in the government to do whatever it wants within another nation. It's horribly ironic to me.
>
> And, if you are talking about classic liberalism, gun control flies in the face of that. Yet that's part of how the Democratic Party defines themselves. And I just don't want to be bound to the limitations that parties put on people. I wish I could be effective without a political party, and when it comes time to get a job, I probably will have to join one, and that really ticks me off.

Sarah and Amanda are distinguished by their enrollment in the Honors College, which means they are writing a thesis. They are not therefore required to take the course

from which most of the study's participants were recruited, thus our paths of introduction were different. Sarah's thesis topic is on the press and the agenda-driven, sometimes jingoist messages, of the press during the first Gulf War. Through this study, she is able to provide an interesting perspective on the 2003 war in Iraq. Of this, she noted

> the presence of historical context in the media tends to hold the political elites accountable for their actions, and their policies, because they are not free to reinvent history at will. For instance ... Winston Churchill used a chemical weapon, some mustard gas, tested it on innocent people. [But one question we have to consider is whether] the fact we have access to this kind of technology makes us righteous in using it. And that Iraq does not have technology to use, so that makes them the aggressor, because its weapons are non-discriminating. There's really no reason for that conclusion. I don't think.

Ryan: A Heritage Grounded in New England Town Meetings

Quiet, thoughtful, and expressing that he believes citizens have a responsibility to be well informed, Ryan told me

> I've always been interested in politics. I always like to know what's going on; I try to follow it, to at least have a clue what's going on in our world, in our country. For me, it's kind of just knowing what's going on, not just reading the headlines. Seeing what the administration is doing this week, being able to see what factors are involved in that decision – we've got to look at both sides, kind of dissect it a little bit. The process involved is what I think about. Just being able to know a little more about it. It's got to have some real world application to it.

Like Robb and Nate, Ryan espoused an expectation that a significant role of government is to help its citizens. His comments quickly flow into a set of statements about the power of community. Ryan told me

> the government looks out for people, not just the ones who got them into office. The rich, the middle class, the lower class, we're all in the same boat. We're all Americans, somehow, that's always been part of the spirit of American – just being a community, helping each other. You're only as strong as your neighbor is, you know. We do have the means and the ways to make it a better society. It frustrates me sometimes that we don't want to do that. We just worry about the

> people at the top. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. I just wonder how far it will go, consolidating it all, those issues.

Different, yet simultaneously similar, to Sharon, Ryan spoke eloquently of a sense of community. The difference related to the respectively urban and rural settings, and the absence of the role of the church. Small town living and New England town meetings are integrated in Ryan's political experiences and his sense of community. He reflected on a

> core of people, they've been in town for a long time. They want to be active, and people love to talk about politics in our town. You know, we still have town meetings in our town. I remember going to those when I was three or four years old. My dad was the fire chief, my mom was on the school board, so I remember tagging along to those big town meetings.
>
> The whole town would ... maybe a thousand people live there, but you would have 500, 600 people at the meetings. That was my introduction to democracy – people taking votes in town meetings, standing up those in favor, or not. Casting your ballots sometimes. I was definitely introduced to it at a pretty early time. Pretty well illustrated for me, how it works.

Finally, Ryan is

> a student athlete. I run track. This is what I don't get – we're out there – the men's track. We're placing in the top at New Englands, we're going to big, big meets.

It doesn't take long for this part of the conversation to move into Ryan's beliefs about Title IX equity, which is equates with Affirmative Action policies.

> We place higher and we run faster than the women do within their sports but we have to buy all our own training shoes. It's tough for us to understand I think schools should do it without being forced to do it. We have $17,000 in scholarship money, but our women's team, who we train with, practice with, has $120,000 in scholarship money. It's the same thing with equipment. The same thing goes for the men's soccer teams, they have the same kind of discrepancies, you know. It's all the smaller sport athletes; we don't understand the fairness. It's something people can look at and say, oh, that's a great idea. But it doesn't make me feel better it doesn't help me with knowing I have $50, $60 thousand in loans to pay back for school. If I was a girl doing track I wouldn't have any. It'd have been free and that bothers me.

Summary

In Chapter Four, the organizing principle is the presentation of portraits of the participants, focused into the three clusters of student responses. These three clusters are, first, the two students who focus on predominately on international politics; second, on three participants who can be described as "locally active," and; third, on the remaining five participants, from whom national politics receives the greater part of their attention.

Two students, Dewey and Nathan, define their understanding and interest in politics within the international aspect of political science. One student derives much of his influence from having lived abroad; the other has developed relationships with other Americans who, through the military, have lived abroad. They are able to describe a duty, a belief in the power of voting, of formal participation, and of democratic rule. These beliefs were forged through living abroad and serving in the military, heavy attention to international affairs during the course of their academic program, and their personal sense of patriotism which influences their worldviews. They are not exclusively interested in international politics, but they are primarily so interested. Both believed in the merits of the U.S.-led, 2003 war in Iraq, believing it to conform to the role of the United States in a post-Cold-War environment.

The common bond for the Locally-Actives is that their awareness is civic rather than political. Of all the participants, these students are less interested in formal national or international political processes. Of the three, Nate is the most political, but his interest in politics is more functional than ideological. He likes the prioritization that is a necessary aspect of local governance. He likes local government and programs that assist citizens locally. Similarly, Sharon wants to contribute to her local community, through her actions rather than through government. Bert is influenced by the same observations – that the local

community is suffering. He differs from the other two in that he blames the national government for the failure of localities to thrive; he shares the belief that political participation on a national scale will not improve what ails our communities.

The Domestic-Political students are described as involved and concerned with domestic politics. There was ironically a visible reluctance to work within established political parties. Amanda and Jack expect to begin law school in a year. Amanda has some hopes that with her law degree, she can work with women's or children's issues; Jack also wants to do civil rights work. In fact, a visible commonality throughout this cluster is that they have all enjoyed privilege, yet identify a personal sense for the need for social justice. For Ryan, that social justice includes race-based affirmative action, but he struggles with the effect he believes Title IX compliance has had on his educational costs.

All five Domestic-Political students are from Maine, and all expressed an expectation that government is responsible for helping citizens. This group provided the strongest disapproval of the Gulf War. These five students can locate their personal senses of community, and notably this cluster represents the bulk of orthodox political experiences to be found among the participants. Robb watched backroom politics in his uncle's bakery, and his comments quickly flow into a set of statements about the power of community. Sarah likes to argue about politics, although she has little interest in formalized political action. Amanda and Robb have worked for a U.S. Senator, and Jack and Sarah are avid consumers of news. Only Amanda described herself as either conservative or Republican, while the others described themselves as liberal. All participants could identify a social or cultural injustice they would like to change.

Chapter Four is organized according to the students as individuals, and how each participant represents a respective focus on international affairs, domestic issues, or local

extrapolitical participation. These ten students, portrayed in this chapter, expressed opinions and perspectives on a number of contemporary political issues. Chapter Five reflects their perspectives on these relevant issues.

Chapter Five

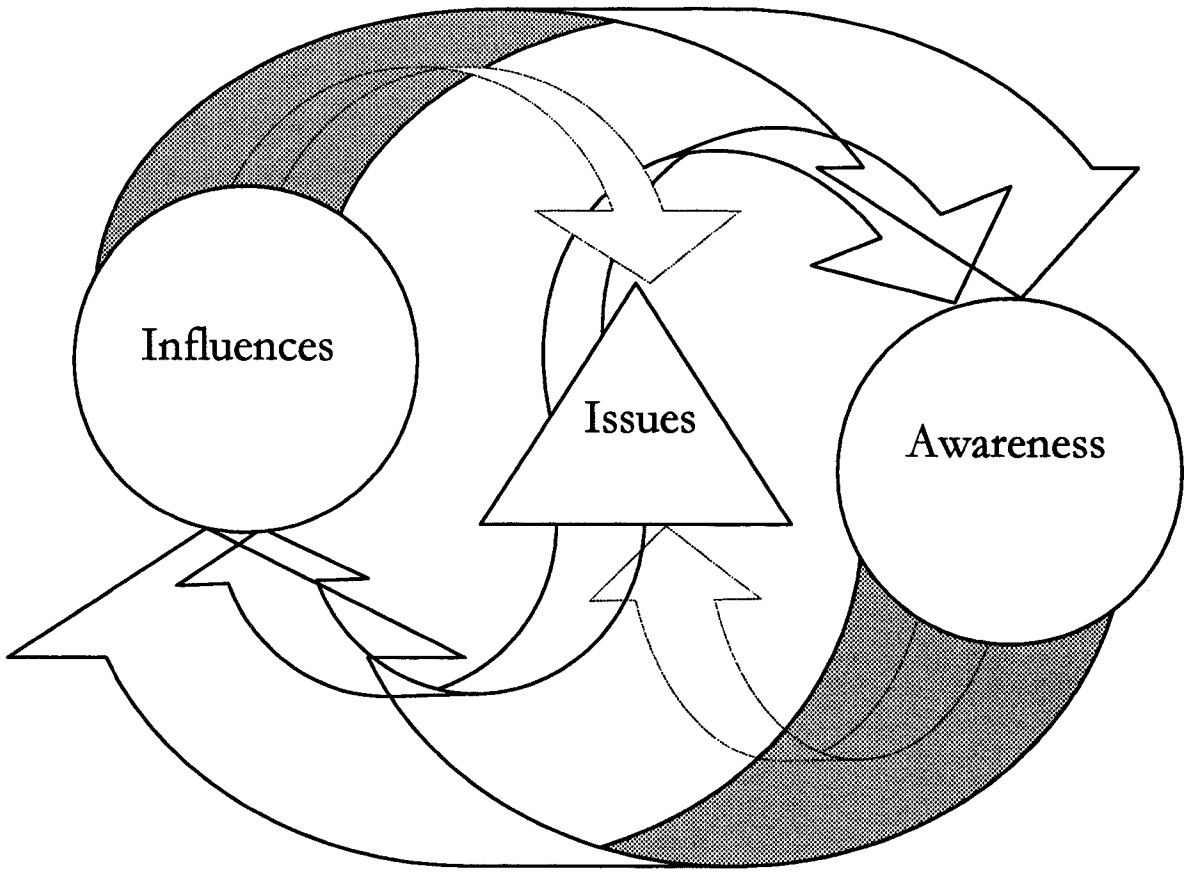
Findings: Making Meaning; Discovering Political Awareness, Influences, and Issues

This chapter presents three aspects generated from participants' comments, representing their perceptions of how governance, politics, and society exist. It is in contrast to Chapter Four, which was organized around the ten profiles of students and their respective sameness of political perspective. The organizing principle for Chapter Five is the Political Awareness participants have about politics and political science; the Political Issues that were important to them, at this point in time and in this place; and the self-identified Political Influences in their lives.

Awareness, Influences, and Issues

Through a variety of issues, the participants illustrate an awareness of politics and political systems. Certainly, identifying students trained in political science should produce such a result, and it is the resulting sense of awareness, recognition of influences, and interpretation of issues that guided the formation of Chapter Five. The students' political awareness contributes to and benefits from a lifetime of political influences – invoking our understanding of socialization and other past influences – as well as current influences, such as the news. It is through these influences they accrue their understanding on current issues. The students identified common sources of political influence as family, peers and schools, and the news. The chapter concludes with some final statements from the participations about the meaning they find in political awareness. These issues are defined by the students

Figure 2. Influences and Awareness Interact with Issues



in relation to their past influences and their awareness. All three – awareness, influences, and issues – are both fixed and fluid; they are all distinct and separate, yet simultaneously intertwined (see Figure 2).

Political science, as a major, seeks to expand awareness and understanding of politics (APSA, 2003). The students in this study fulfilled this expectation. Amanda suggested that

> a lot of political science majors – the perception is they are either pre-law, or people who want to actively pursue a political career themselves. I think that is valid for a very large portion. But I think people miss the larger picture of that. I've always been interested in government and politics. Learning about your system of government and other systems of government. I think there is a lot more to political science, maybe, than people originally think.

Her comments suggest the juxtaposition that knowledge of systems and personal understanding of issues creates.

Political Awareness

One of the more popular sentiments expressed by the participants is that of pride, the expectation they had of themselves, the implied expectation they had of others to be knowledgeable about politics and the state of our civil society. This section includes statements about this expectation of participation, their thoughts about democracy and U.S. government, about voting, their generation and its leaders, and their senses of patriotism.

Expectations

Robb described the ways we participate in government:

> there are so many levels of it. You participate by voting, you participate to a greater level by demonstrating, protesting, joining some sort of group, an activist thing, like the Sierra Club, N.R.A., something like that. I think that's another part of political participation, or you can be involved in local government – you can be a selectman or on town council. I think there's many ways to do it, to be active.

The sense that citizens have a responsibility to be knowledgeable was present in Robb's comments. He dismissed the notion that the Senator for whom he staffs has decided to follow her political party's decisions rather than arriving at decisions of her own:

> I think the public should know that they are thinking about both sides. I know I handle a lot of calls about the war in Iraq, people call up and say I can't believe the Senator didn't vote her conscience. I think [each] side [feels a] need to demonize the opposition. I'd like to say is, "I can't believe you don't believe she didn't vote her conscience." Like, how do you know? Why do you think ... you can voice your opinions, what to say she didn't vote her conscience, that she was influenced by other, outside means, I don't know. I think she thinks about it.

He expects the same thoughtful participation of all citizens. He stated,

> you need to know what's going on in the world., if you're going to vote for people. We're at the point where something we do effects thousands of people. You never really know, what you do, products you buy. Like it could be made in a sweat shop in Taiwan.

Nathan takes a strong stand on the matter of citizens not exercising their franchise. He believes that

> the average American ought to be able to be informed about what they are voting about. And they ought to go out and vote. It's their duty to vote, it's their obligation to vote, because there are countries who don't vote. If you live in a country that allows you to vote, you ought to go out and vote.

As Ryan contemplated some reasons citizens might not be active in politics, he admitted,

> I don't know the answer to that. I think it's more about, it starts with the people, people have to want to know about it. You can't force them, so, you can't force them to be involved, obviously, as evidenced by our voter turnout, participation.
>
> maybe we are too busy now-a-days to vote. Maybe it's because people feel their votes don't count. I don't understand it. It won't make a difference, though. I think we just lose track on what we have that other countries don't have. Immigrants come here from other countries. Can't wait to be an American citizen. I don't think we're exposed to that, to see these people from third world African

> countries, coming over here, they're working three jobs and trying to go to school, trying to be a citizen, want so much to be a citizen, to be able to vote in a meaningful election. We take it for granted, I guess.
>
> But, I don't know. I don't have the answer, I wish I did. We have to make people more interested, so they take an interest, to care about it. I'm not sure that it is happening. It's just due to the nature of us as Americans.

To be an American

So, then, what does "us as Americans" mean? Sharon, who was the only person of color in the study, has a stronger sense of race identity than national identity. Her courage to describe this in an interview was notable. In describing her emotional ties to the U.S. political system, Sharon expressed that

> yes, I am an American, but I'm black first. Because, you know, if I was to go outside of the country, people wouldn't see African-American, they'd see an American. But in this country ... I disagree with the term "African-American." I've never been to Africa, you know what I mean. I know nothing about Africa. But I am black.
>
> I want to be able to say I'm an American. Yes, I am an American, but if it comes down to it, I'm black first.

The remainder of the students – who are notably Caucasian, from more privilege, and from more rural areas – mostly described a more orthodox sense of patriotism, the kind of patriotism suggested by U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair,

> tell the world why you're proud of America. Tell them when the "Star-Spangled Banner" starts, Americans get to their feet – Hispanics, Irish, Italians, Central Europeans, East Europeans, Jews, Muslims, white, Asian, black....
>
> Tell them why Americans, one and all, stand upright and respectful. Not because some state official told them to, but because

> whatever race, color, class, or creed they are, being American means being free. That's why they're proud. (p. A20)

Nathan's and Robb's description of seeing the influence of the United States while living abroad, Dewey's enthusiasm in his role as an Army officer, and Sarah's love of liberty and her understanding of civil rights exemplify the types of patriotism the study participants embodied. For Nate, "patriotism" is

> a love of your country, a love of the institutions, the political institutions themselves. I don't know ... you compare me to my brother, he's in the Marines, and I definitely know he's a patriot. He loves his country; he is serving his country. He's definitely a patriot.
>
> I definitely have deep respect for the institutions of government at this point, whether or not I agree with what my government does, if that makes me unpatriotic. I don't know, but I definitely have respect for government. Maybe that's the definition of patriotism.

Vote or Shut Up

Nathan's expectation of citizen participation includes a belief that nonparticipants should recognize,

> If you don't vote, that's your right, but don't complain. If I want to complain, that's all right, as long as I voted. I made sure I made my vote, my legal right to complain. People say, "I don't like what Bush is doing"...well, did you vote? If they say, "no," then well, [*blows raspberry*] – what are you talking to me about, then? If you don't participate in our political process, then don't complain about it. If you want to do something, go ahead and change it.

A little more relaxed, Ryan, whose profile described him as a son of a locally involved family in a small, New England village, explained,

> people love to talk about stuff in our town. Kind of the rallying cry – if you don't vote, you don't have a right to complain. You don't have a right to say anything. People do vote; they do show up to town meetings and make argument. They do vote in our little elections at our little town hall. It's kind of a different community in that sense. It's very active. I think people feel a need to do it, because they care about it. They want to be able to talk about it, they want to be able to thing, too. Old timers, this is the way New England is.

In contrast, Sarah was able to show some cynicism as she described a situation where her mother

> said to me, "you are a political science major. This is democracy at its finest. New England town meeting." And I'm thinking, "yeah, democracy at its finest and I'm going to go to this town meeting so my mother can tell me how to vote on this school budget."

In the way of a reminder, I attended a course to recruit participants for this study. For this course, Jack wrote his term paper on the problems associated with our winner-take-all system of elections. He exploded while relaying a concept he heard from a fellow student:

> and then some kid in there said that you don't participate unless you win. I had to say, "so, if you vote for somebody who didn't win, you didn't vote!?" What's the point in that?

He continued, almost voicing a wish that his colleagues were more compassionate, more idealistic, suggesting that

> the study of the way things work is interesting, but the study of how things pretend to work, so they can control things, is even more interesting.

Sarah put some aspects of political participation into perspective. Reflecting moderate sentiments, Sarah posited that community service better suits the life that traditional-age college students experience. She said,

> it is easier to be locally involved, rather than involved on a wider scale. I can't really comprehend why it seems that young people are so uninvolved, politically, because it seems that the drive to be involved comes from your peers and from the outside.

Excitement of Voting

In Chapter One, I divulged some of my own feelings about voting. The students in the study shared feelings of excitement about their first voting experiences. Amanda blurted

> I was really excited. The first year that I was able to vote, it was an off-year, the summer of '99. The summer after I graduated. The only things on the ballot were some bond issues. I still wanted to go, to vote. [The second time I voted, I went about] 5:00 or 6:00 in the

> afternoon-evening. There were a bunch of senior citizens there manning the polls. They were so excited – it was a slow day. They were all "you're number 32 who's voted today," and "thank you so much for taking the time."

Robb, too, was

> excited when I turned 18 – I couldn't wait. I was real excited to be able to vote. The 1996 election, I missed it by a year, and I was bummed about that. I wanted to vote. I don't understand why someone wouldn't want to do it. I'm glad I'm able to do it.

The first Presidential election in which many of the participants were eligible to vote was the 2000 election. Reflecting on the campaign season, Sarah recalled, "it was really cool being around here during the 2000 election. The level we were encouraged to be involved was really huge." Similarly, Amanda was "somewhat involved in the campaign. I had signs up for [President Bush] in my dorm room, the only signs for him I saw on campus." Amanda reminisced about election night. She

> was up until 3:00 or whatever that morning. All excited at 2:00, my roommate couldn't believe that I was really sitting up and watching, getting excited by the numbers coming in. Excited at 2:30 when they called it, and I couldn't believe when they took it back.

Ceasar and Busch (2001) described the results of the 2000 presidential election as a "highly controversial decision by the U.S. Supreme Court overruling a highly controversial decision by the Florida Supreme Court to assure George Bush his election" (p. 2). I must admit to some surprise about lack of response from the students about the election of 2000, the "debacle" of which Patterson (2002) described as the latest example of "America's electoral history ... replete with examples of public policies designed to deny or suppress the vote" (p. 144). Perhaps this is the effect of "9/11 ... render[ing] irrelevant the question of Bush's tarnished legitimacy" (Alterman, 2003, p. 208); regardless, each participant could note for whom they had voted, and most could recite reasons they had supported their favored candidate. Nathan saw

> George Bush was a very good candidate. He's young, he's kind of charismatic, he's got that kind of 'Joe Everybody' thing – he created himself that way. He was a very good candidate. And I was perfectly happy with – I was fine with the $300 in my pocket, which got Bush elected.

In contrast, Bert

> wasn't impressed with [Gore] at all, and Bush, Bush just looked like an idiot in his debate with McCain. Actually, I kind of liked McCain. Gore was never impressive. Nader had a good showing in Maine,

he said, perhaps satisfied with his choice to vote for Nader. Most surprising for me was the subsequent lack of outrage at the Supreme Court's decision to stop the ballot counting in Florida. Only four of the participants thought enough of it to mention the Florida situation. For three, it was a macabre joke, a capitulation of power and status. The fourth, Amanda, provided interpretive statements about the conclusion of the election. She opined the election being decided by the Court is

> problematic. I guess the competitive part of me – win at any cost – was happy. But it is problematic because it seems that I spend a lot of time defending the process that, maybe, I didn't agree with myself. But my horse came out in front. I think that's been an issue throughout his presidency – that's kind of obvious.

Thoughts of a Generation

The voting rates presented in Chapter Two pave the path to a conclusion of youth indifference. The Tarrance Group (2000) study suggests that conclusion is overstated with respect to college students, because youth who do not attend college are disproportionately uninvolved. For Nathan, college has been a time for personal growth, which includes his world perspective. He reflected on

> the way I was raised, or the way I was encouraged to see the world, not all of it was black and white, but a lot of it was black and white. Looking over my college career, I think college has moderated my views, rather than radicalized my views. It seems that age, and, you know, working, and all that helps to moderate – I started off pretty extreme and have moderated as I go through my college career.

The participants described their thoughts about politics and their generation, specifically the leadership that appeals to them and the devolving relevance of political parties to this generation. Here, first, is Ryan, who contrasted his generation and his parents by reflecting on his

> dad, [who] had a job when he left college: he was married and had a job, and, that's it, for the next thirty, forty years. Most of my friends have found jobs already, the ones that graduated last year, they're already into jobs. I'm not sure they have careers, but they went right into the work force. They're trying to pay back their loans and all that kind of stuff.
>
> I don't think that's so much today, as it was back then, but [young] people don't want to have a job, don't want to leave school and start a career that's going to take them to retirement. I'm not so worried about not having a career waiting.
>
> I'm not sure how that relates to attitudes about the political system and political participation. I've got a feeling it does somehow. All because of the way the economy and globalization, you know, this global society.

Youthful expectations of political leaders

Bennis and Thomas (2002) connote a change in the view of politics and politicians, a change in how politics are perceived. Political information increasingly is delivered through "target market" approaches (p. 53), and for youth, who see that messages are directed – sans subtlety – toward their demographic, politics has become entertainment. As casual and packaged for youth appeal he was, Sarah has a difference perspective of her

> political hero ... Bill Clinton, but of course, he can't run for office any more. What I like about Clinton, especially, is... he more than anyone embodies the philosopher king. Rational leadership. Presidents are supposed to surround themselves with advisors. Think through things. Come to a best course of action. He is one of the few people in history who ever did that. Political philosophers are the best presidents.

Meanwhile, she finds his predecessor wanting, saying,

> I don't want to speculate about our current president, but there is a lot more control going on from his cabinet officials than from his own mind. But the Democrats right now, I don't think, except for maybe a couple of them, aren't really making a distinction between themselves and George Bush – that's the problem right now. I would have liked to seen someone like Mondale give it a second try. How are you going to choose between them?

Jack has not given up. His profile parallels those Doppelt and Shearer (1999) offered as "Alienated ... people taking action and standing up for what they believe are what matter ... the electoral process and voting do not" (p. 180). He still votes, but is clearly frustrated with the G. W. Bush administration:

> Not only that, but everybody in the administration is just the same, just one step up. They all moved up one notch since the last since the last time they were there. They're the same people, and they want to finish the job that they started, way back when. I just don't trust them, at all. I don't understand why they should be the ones in charge of deciding these things? I don't trust them!

His view of politicians, as a whole, is not favorable, either:

> people want a benevolent government that rules in a non-self interest ... you know, they don't even, they wouldn't even pay attention to government if it ruled in a way that was not of self-interest. These ambitious ... guys – they are willing to do things just to get elected. Why else would they aspire to be in government if they didn't have – there are so few who don't actually have these political or financial personal ties, and they end up making asses out of themselves. They become people who are just trying to preserve their status.

Party identification

Political ideology as expressed through party identification is something many of the students wanted to express. Amanda still believes that her vote was well-placed for President Bush:

> I am a registered Republican but I consider myself to be a liberal Republican. I'm not a party voter. Whoever jumps out at me that I like, or issues that I most identify with... I did vote for our current president. I was excited, and happy of course, with the outcome.

Her sentiments of loose party loyalty is evident in Sarah's statement, who posited,

> what political parties can do for you. Political parties, they don't really pay attention to my generation that much, they don't cater to our needs, to our interests. That's because we don't vote anyway. We aren't the ones that control the money, the economy of America.

Robb thinks about the difference between parties, for what he believes is in conflict with the beliefs of the politician for whom he works. He has developed an equally egalitarian perspective of for whom to vote. Several participants – Amanda, Sarah, Nate, and Nathan's – shared similar beliefs, that the better strategy is to vote for the person, not their party. Robb also subscribes to this approach, suggesting,

> if you've seen the movie Primary Colors, in the movie, John Travolta looks at the camera and says, "no matter what we did during the campaign, it was all just because I know, that at that point, when I'm sitting there in the office, I'm the best one to make that decision."

Representing Susan.

The thought Robb has put into his party affiliation is considerable. I recall that before meeting him, I developed assumptions of Robb, based on his employment for one of the United States Senators, a Republican. However, Robb correctly pointed out that both Senators from Maine are Republicans, so any student wanting that experience would necessarily have to work, in this instance, for a Republican. Such an experience requires him to suppress his opinions in public communiqués, although he sees room for honest disagreement or debate, in the office, thus the occasional opportunity to influence coworkers, provided these conversations remain in the office setting. He explained,

> yeah, I'm not a Republican, if that's your next question. I am an Independent, which I guess is because I don't really seem to agree with every side on everything; with either side, the Democrats or the Republicans.
>
> I've got no problem writing a letter to someone saying what [Senator Collin's] stance is. I remember one day someone [at the Senator's office] asked, "what's your stance on gun control?" And I told them that there shouldn't be assault rifles sold...and they said, well, the Senator thinks, just reeled off what I needed to write, that's what I

> had to write. That's okay. That's my role, that's what I'm supposed to do. But knowing that – a letter like that would be a form letter, there's already language made. But when something comes in...I did something on corporate life insurance. So, I had to do research and write a letter. I have to think that she might not know a lot about that, might not have thought much about it, the way I put my letter might actually make her think, oh, that makes sense.

Robb reflected on the implication of his decision on his potential future in politics:

> once you work for a Republican, you sort of limit yourself. If I go much further, like an intern in the field office, I'll be just fine. It is just fine. But if I ever got an L.A. job, with some sort of higher staff position, I think it would be hard to turn around and work for a liberal democrat, like from New York. I mean resume wise, just harder to get through the door to talk to talk to them. I always say that I'm not so much a Republican as part of Team Collins. I like Senator Collins. She does a good job. I helped out on the campaign, things like that. So, that's more camaraderie now than party affiliation.

Remember, though, Nathan and Dewey, classified as International-Status Oriented. Despite this focus, they also heed national, domestic politics. In this vein, Nathan identified himself as

> a conservative by nature. I'm generally ... I hate being labeled but with domestic concerns, I like to see myself as a classical conservative. Don't mess with it unless ... if it's working, don't mess with it. If you're going to mess with it, show me what going to happen first.

He explained his beliefs that conservatives are more rational, and liberals are

> optimists as opposed to realists. Conservatives say, "here's a problem, but why is that a problem?" This is a problem because of the past or because of underlying factors and those, we can change a little bit. That future, though that's nice and we'd all like to be there, it's a real world sometimes and it's <u>that</u> you have to change it.

Nathan and Dewey demonstrated a preference to focus on international politics, but as was noted in the introduction to the chapter, they do heed domestic policy as well. Samples of their comments about the domestic political spectrum serve to complete their profile. Dewey confided:

> I'm a Democrat, although I don't identify a lot with either party that much – most Democrats I talk to are perfectly normal also. There are those fringe elements in both of those, the parties; I just see it as a problem that America has to face. Both groups propose legislation which I really disagree with. The Democratic Party, I see a lot of it being taken over by these ... nuts, I mean, people that make the most radical persons seem normal, mainstream. I mean their both ... most Republicans I talk to are not ultra religious, conservative, [but still the] Religious Right is trying to dismantle Roe v. Wade, trying to dismantle the bans on prayer in school.

And with respect to the upcoming Presidential election, Nathan hypothesized:

> I think Bush will be reelected. I just don't see the Democratic Party – they don't have the candidate, the force. I would say, God Bless the Democratic Party. They are going to shoot themselves in the foot. They're split right now, there are just so many candidates right now. Gore, he was their, the last generation of the Clinton Democrats, he had that kind of persuasion. Now they are going to have to, under a Republican government, come up with somebody else. Will Rogers, his famous quote comes to mind – "I don't belong to an organized party, I belong to the Democratic Party."

Political Influences

Student participants identified three sources of political influences. This section is divided into the influences originating from the students' families and community, their personal experiences in orthodox political systems, and how the students both consume news and view the role of the media.

Family and Community

As noted in Chapter Two, political socialization is a relevant and prominent source of political development (Davies, 1977; Hyman, 1959/1969; Hess & Torney, 1968; Jennings & Niemi, 1974; Kinder & Sears, 1985; Lipset, 1995; Roberts & Edwards, 1991; Sigal, 1965). Socialization in general comes from either parents or society to influence the child (ibid). Logically, as Amanda noted, "your own family has a huge impact on" one's choices and opportunities. Several participants identified their families and homelives and their schools and communities as sources of influence, the effects of which include their political ideology

and levels of civic participation. For example, Nate, explaining his choice to "vote along party lines" in the 2002 election, identified

> my background, my family's party affiliation has always been Democrat. I guess I would say that's where I gained my party identification from them, as a Democrat.

Likewise, Dewey cited his parents identification with the Democratic party as being instrumental in his choice to register as a Democrat; while Nathan reflected on his parents' conservatism as influencing him. Above, Sarah revealed a recognition of the role her teachers played in her political education. She attributed much of her political education to her "political science teacher in high school," who

> did a very good job – attempted and succeeded – at being very objective. He didn't tell us whether he was a democrat or a republican – he did a very good job making sure it wasn't known in class what he was.

Sharon, too, identifies her nonpartisan social concern as the result of the community of her youth. Recalling the story from her profile about the women in her church rallying to help her pay her college bill, Sharon suggests that the support and generosity she has experienced is

> a trait most black women have. I always had ... female role models, people I looked up to or could relate to. There are so many people in my church who are like that. Whatever you need, they can do it for you.

Sarah located political influences in both home and school, noting "those groups really do – I keep coming back to this – help you to solidify your views." The effects were mostly ideological. The difference between the roles her parents and teachers play, she hypothesized, is that

> parents and friends will try to convince you to come over to come over to their side. I don't really agree with my parents on a lot of things. When that comes up in our conversation, I feel obligated to tell them why.

However,

> I think that the push from my teachers came from their passing on of knowledge. Where I say they encouraged us to be politically thoughtful, they made us write papers on the election, and they made us research things and they didn't necessarily form my views, like my parents and my peers do, but they helped me form my own. If there is a distinction, that would be it. Peers and parents more or less want to tell people that you shouldn't just want someone to change something for you, you have to work for it.

Orthodox Political Experiences

A number of students have experienced conventional or orthodox political experiences. Among these are working in campaigns, working as interns or staff for an elected official, holding student government positions, or even the study of political science. Continuing to explain the role of her teachers and school, Sarah recounts that

> as the [1996] Presidential campaign was going on, me and our political science class, had our own little Presidential campaign. We took a survey and were divided into two parties. There was this one issue in my party that I really disagreed with, and one of my friends disagreed with it as well, and we went off and formed our own little party. We came in second out of five candidates. It was a lot of fun. I don't know if you can count that as political involvement.

Referring to a more formalized political engagement than Sarah's high school class, Robb reflected that he

> would go back to Washington in a minute, to work on the Hill. That was probably the most exciting educational experience I've had, hands down. I think every political science major, whether they have interest in the American government or not, should get that sort of hands on, that look at the process,

while Nate laments that

> I've never really had that sort of political experience. I've never worked for a legislator. In fact, I was trying to get into [his local state legislator's] office a few years ago. They were having ... trying to pass the budget at that point, so they were really, really busy. I couldn't get past his chief of staff. But I've never had a chance to actually be on some staff before. I'd love to try that, but it just seems that as my college days dwindle, I'll have less time to actually do that, less chance

> to be involved in something like that, to volunteer for that sort of thing. I don't know. I guess that's because I don't have the experience, I don't know how to get involved in those sorts of things. But that's conceivably something, somewhere I could end up.

Another testing ground for political participation is student government. Amanda

> tried to be a student senator once. Really didn't like it, it didn't really fit my... I went to a couple of meeting, and got all the signatures. It just didn't fit into what I ...they're focused too much on procedure.

Likewise, Nathan has been involved with student government, which he suggests is

> training so I could run for run for office. I'd like to get in office. I am the president of York Village. I was a student senator, but now I have other time commitments when they meet. I try to go, watch. I have a great time watching other people, and I wish I was a senator again so I could yell and scream just like the rest of them. I do like the process; I do like politics.

In addition to student government, Amanda credits her coursework and the political science program for her knowledge of our current leaders. With some pride, and some disbelief, she told a story about she and her friends

> sitting around watching the State of the Union last year, and I'm there picking out Supreme Court justices, oh, there's so-and-so. [My roommate] was asking, "how do you know that?" but if were watching a medical show – she's a nursing major – she'd know all of it, be able to get into it. It's all about what you're into. I wouldn't think it was strange that she had that sort of knowledge about her field but .... Everyone, they seem to think it's weird that I know who these people were.

Finally, Ryan demonstrated he had given thought to the differences between his and his parents' generation. Globalization, he argued, effects and is effected by how citizens consume news. He posited,

> my parents' generation, generations before them, they didn't really know much more what was going on outside their immediate area. They knew a little bit about what was going on in the big cities, in Washington, but it was more what's going on in their town, their area, that's the world they knew.

> Us, growing up in a technological age, of course we know what's going on every corner of the world, every corner of the country. We realize there's just so much more out there. It's a little more difficult to be satisfied.

News and Media

The news is a constant element of the lives of the students who participated in this study. The news consumed by the participants and the effort these students use to gather their news varied. Perhaps one of the more surprising, and perversely humorous, aspects of the participants' comments is their legitimate use of spoof news programs. Three categories were organized from the responses of the participants. Following an introduction that describes the attitudes the participants had toward news, this section contrasts the convenience in gathering the news participants expect and the work the students expect to exert to decipher their news sources. Finally, the participants' thoughts about bias in the media are explored.

The students described a sense of comfort from having access to the news. Ryan is, without doubt, a consumer of the news. He gets his "news from CNN, Nightly News, [and by daily reading] a couple of newspapers on line." Still, he said that

> one of the things I always enjoy about going home, my folks subscribe to a daily newspaper. Sitting down at breakfast and reading the paper from cover to cover. That is something I just don't get to do, here. They take the Nashua Telegraph, the Boston Globe sometimes. The Telegraph is really about being home.

Ryan completed his term paper on the role that late night comedy shows play in distributing news and commentary, even if that news is accompanied by a punch line. A little more seriously, Sarah noted that she does not consume a lot of news, that

> I don't have a lot of time to watch the news. My main source of news is the Daily Show [a nightly news-format show, self-described as "the fake news," on Comedy Central]. There are worse ways to get the news. All of the political science professors have also listed it as a source of their news. I don't feel too bad about that.

Nate, too, is, without doubt, a consumer of the news. He gets his "news from CNN, Nightly News, [and by daily reading] a couple of newspapers on line, and Jack's news comes from "NPR" and the progressive program, "DemocracyNow;" The comfort that comes from having a newspaper in the house is evident as Nate speaks of his roommates themselves have newspapers in their apartment. When he "want[s] to read about state issues I'll pick up the Kennebec Journal at the library." Some were remarkably serious and diligent in retrieving news; others, like Robb, spoke of news as an omnipresent if placid companion. He suggested the average person's consumption of the news is fairly passive, speculating that "people ... can't go beyond what they're fed by national news," then said of he and his

> roommate; every night we'll watch either the nightly news or something. We don't watch a lot of TV but we'll turn on *Crossfire* or some news program.

Convenience of News Sources is Key

Amanda is a self-described, "big MSNBC-kind of person. Cable News, love it, because I can turn it on any time. I'm not good at a schedule." In fact, many of the students admitted that they "watch the network national news nearly every night, but I would only watch CNN if I'm home and trying to do homework," while just as many "don't religiously watch CNN or Fox News or any of those networks." In fact, Several of the participants described an internet-based consumption of news, identifying, in particular, "going to the NY Times website." Some were more diligent than others. Among those are the two students with an international focus: Dewey reads the Christian Science Monitor website daily while Nathan

> look[s] at six news sources a day. Going from the BBC to AP and Reuters; I do watch ABCNews at night; I watch PBS, and I listen and I read the Wall Street Journal.

"It Takes Work" to Stay Informed

Hence, the reality is that being informed takes some effort. Dewey acknowledged the expenditure of effort being informed requires, then recounts a need, a feeling that personally compels him to be well-informed:

> there have been a lot of times I have said, well, I'm tired now, and I'm not going to listen to the news tonight or I don't check the web or something for the news, something like that. But to be honest with you. ... it is comforting sometimes not hearing about some of the things that are happening, but just ignoring them doesn't make them go away. Whenever I'm uninformed about something I eventually start freaking out, I just get really nervous, and thinking that I don't know what's going on. I just have to find out.

Sarah advocates for citizens to take the effort not only to read, but to actively synthesize, both corporate and alternative news. She noted that the

> conclusion of my thesis is that when you take two [opposing] viewpoints together and look at them as a whole, that's how you can get an objective source of news.... the alternative media is that, I'm finding, they are just as biased as the mainstream media.

Bias in the Media

In asserting that the ontological approach of corporately-owned press is too sterile, Sarah alleged that during the first Gulf War,

> the mainstream media was biased toward support of the administration; the alternative media was biased against it.
>
> It's not so far a stretch for Iraqis to [conclude that there] is this aggressor nation out there; they are called the United States. But the prospect of portraying our nation in such a negative light that we might be using some weapons, we won't do it, even if it might be true. I don't know if we could use those kinds of weapons.

Sarah explained her suggested approach of reading and synthesizing diametrically opposed news sources, because

> media is [sic] a filtering tool for information. You can't expect to get the whole picture, because of limitations: how much research you are able to do, and how much people are able to print.

Finally, she posited the reason for the importance of the alternative voice

> is that the majority opinion, even if it is not really the majority, [becomes] perceived as the majority. They will eventually drown out the minority, because individuals are afraid of isolation from society, therefore even if they don't agree with the majority opinion, they will silence themselves. They'll say that they agree with it, or they won't speak up at all. Eventually, this snowballs, until there is really only one opinion.

Sharon believes that the media "report what is going on but they don't report it in the context of history," and Nathan asserted that "news organizations reflect an ideology, whether or not they try not to; whatever. They reflect an ideology, while Jack chimed in, arguing that when he hears someone saying, "I'm watching CNBC, MSNBC, Fox News, CNN – I'm trying to get a broad view, what different people are saying." He wants to yell, "They are the same!"

Amanda confessed she "tends to feel that the media tends to be more liberal than conservative," but recognized that "people always think the – that your view always gets the short end of the stick." Jack agrees with Sarah that corporate press is too worried about its appearance in the public's eye to be a valuable, credible source. He pointed to the

> Bill Maher quote, the one he got kicked off ABC for. [Referring to the terrorists on September 11] he's like, you can't call them cowards. You can call them mean and nasty names, but these people, they stood up there, they gave their lives, flew the planes into the building. It's awful; they were awful, awful people, but not cowards, though. A cowardly act is shooting your missiles from the middle of the sea, from 1000 miles away. That's a cowardly act.

In fairness, Jack acknowledged that the alternative media "have their own problems and biases – big problems. They're media too, but they refuse to see...refuse to ignore the humanity of other people."

Pertinent Issues

In Common Fire (Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Daloz Parks, 1996), seven alliterated phenomena are observed in contemporary young leaders. Three of these seven characteristics are particularly useful in grounding the topical arrangement for the issues identified by this study's participants. Thus, the remainder of the chapters is composed of thick descriptions originating from students comments, coalesced into themes organized around Parks Daloz, et al, notions of the New Commons, sources of Community, and the demonstration of Compassion.

The New Commons

In Common Fire (Parks Daloz, et al., 1996), the New Commons reflects on the old commons, a "shared, public space of the sort that anchored the American vision of democracy" (p. 2), citing as examples the

> classic New England green ... the square at the county seat in the South, the bodega in the Latino community, Main Street in middle America, a ballpark, school, temple or cathedral in the city, or the fishing wharf on the coast. (p. 2)

They alleged the "sense of the commons is being eroded" (p. 2). Part of what Parks Daloz, et al., reported was paralleled by Amanda, who explained that in one

> class called Individual in the Community we talked a lot about how technology, instead of bringing people together, instead of me going to the library necessarily, and talking to the librarian, before I do that, I can sit in my apartment by myself on my computer, and find everything I need so I can, you know, when I get to the library, go straight ahead, do my thing.
>
> People got into this huge discussion, that instead of making face-to-face, human, real human connections, that you're getting on line to do that, that you're getting into a chat room or on-line some other way. Then someone brought up the argument, "does it matter?" You know, it's still a community. You still have ties to something. How is

> that different, how is that similar, than going to your neighbors' for a barbeque, or going to a town meeting? Yes, there are similarities, any community is good; any connection that you make is valuable. But how do you, that social interaction, how do you interact face-to-face when increasingly, you're substituting on-line for in-person.

This erosion of the New Commons, Parks Daloz, et al., posited, is presented in two phenomena, and this section is divided thus. The first commonality is that of sharing common connections, which draws on concepts such as community and social capital, described in Chapter Two. The foundations of these connections follow. For many participants, community is a product of their hometown experiences, which in large part means a small town experience. The students' social roles in their hometowns are also detailed.

Connections

Few of the connections the participants identified were overtly political. That is not to say these connections do not exist. In her profile, Sarah described the connection to a high school teacher who provided a mechanism for her and other students to be connected to the national campaign, and her connection to a gubernatorial campaign as a result of a friend's participation in that campaign. Nate described a

> personal identification with [Senator] Susan Collins as well. She's been at my church a couple of times; I actually dated her speechwriter's daughter for a little while. I knew her personally, so I suppose that was another thing that played a role in [my decision to vote for her].

Amanda also described a personal situation connecting her to a candidate. She

> was in Washington when that primary went down. ...in the primaries. [When Kevin Raye] beat Tim Woodcock. We were all bummed out, of course, that Tim didn't win. His wife works in Senator Collin's office in Bangor, and I've gotten to really know her well.

Small towns

Maine is a state filled with small towns and small cities; in fact, the university campus that was the site of this project is in a community of approximately 9,000 citizens, about half of whom are transitory student residents (USCB, 2002d). Small town life plays a prominent role in the lives of nearly all participants. It has shaped their views of community, which includes some recognition of the various class and social roles that they and their neighbors possess. In their conversations, participants presented the greatest sense of connection through their hometown experiences. For example, recall Ryan, who described his hometown as "a really small, rural town" and his experiences attending town meetings, witnessing his "dad ... the fire chief, my mom was on the school board."

The participants also expressed concern about the quality of rural education and the economic depression their communities are experiencing, as changes in agricultural and manufacturing markets have taken their toll. Only one study participant identified an urban center as her hometown. Sharon described the challenge of

> coming from a city. From my house I can get on the bus and go anywhere, and be there in five minutes, and the bus is right down the street, or the train. Here, I was like, "okay, I can't walk on the interstate." That was the one huge thing. It's a culture shock, almost...

Sharon's sense of community is rooted in her church. Even outside of church, Sharon suggested that an urban setting provides

> community, you still know everybody. I think it'll be easier for me, because Black people can talk to me because I've been where they are, I grew up in the 'hood, so to speak.

Dewey, Amanda, and Bert hail from neighboring communities in the secluded Maine North Woods. Dewey summarized the comments of these three by describing it as "out in the middle of nowhere." Vividly, Bert described

> this sort of green glow to the south – a combination of the paper mills in Old Town and the lights of Bangor – it's green. The radio and TV reception is so bad that satellite signals are my only steady source of news. It's north, way up there, off the highway. Living there, it's very isolated.

Amanda reflected that "living in D.C. for the summer gave me a new appreciation for a smaller setting," connecting the size of the community with an enjoyable

> social climate here. I like some of the sense of being a little bit anonymous, and I did sort of like that in D.C., that you could come and go and do without being noticed; but at home, with a relatively small community ... It's nice to know your neighbors, having that sort of connection to people. Not getting on the metro every morning, and just holding the poles and not looking at anybody. You know, if you hold the doors open for somebody, in D.C., people are like, they can't believe that you're doing that. Or you go into C.V.S. and say, "hi, how are you?" the clerk will look at you wrong. That's just so foreign to, I guess, how I grew up, in a small town.

She reflected that

> I like the fact that it's a smaller, friendlier community. Everybody knows everybody. I think everyone from a small town goes through that, you know: "I'm out of here. I'm never coming back. I want to go to Boston, I want to go to New York City."

Like Amanda, Nate romanticizes his small town experience.

> I've always kind of had an affinity to that, to small towns, and I have to say, Gardiner is not this wonderful, amazing town, but I love it. It's my hometown. But I feel like I can make wherever I am, my hometown, that way just by being involved.

The public school system sometimes establishes the boundary for the community. Bert chuckled, "it's kind of bizarre. Until I was – almost in high school – I didn't realize I lived in LeGrange. Because the whole school district goes to school in Milo, so I just always thought I lived in Milo." He said of his rural community, "well, we are practically Canadian. I've done a little bit of traveling, but most people never think of Canada, don't really realize it exists. Rural Maine is, though, very Canadian, culturally."

This loose allegiance to our Northern neighbors is perplexing for Nate. He observed,

> people from the north, they feel like they are being left out.... I was talking to a coworker that lives right on the border ... and he considers himself half Canadian, you know. He doesn't consider himself a Mainer. For him, he's always – you know, it's not about the United States. I asked him once about the two Maines, and he said, "I don't consider myself a Mainer half the time." I mean, I come to school in Maine, but when I'm home, it's more like I'm Canadian.

Dewey echoed a common sentiment: small, rural communities are

> not exactly cosmopolitan ... Cambridge and the area around it, most of the people there are not educated. In Cambridge, basically when you graduated from high school or certain social groups, regular high school, you weren't supposed to go to college, you were supposed to get a job. They may be intelligent, but they don't know much about the outside world.

Amanda prophesized that she would "like to be able to mix that small community with some more urban opportunities for myself and, you know, should a family come along." She is an apologist for the quality of life available in her small town, while recognizing the lack of resources that are at times available in those same small towns. She said of the public school system from which she hails, it "has the bare minimum of what you need, not a lot of elective offerings." Thence, she blames that limited educational ontology for

> a "that's all there is" kind of mentality. I think it's important to understand not only how your government works but how other governments work, and how they interact. Maybe not thinking so much as a United States citizen but as more of a global citizen. To understand why British parliament works the way it does, or why African tribal nations .... How does that fan out? I think that kind of knowledge is important.

This cosmopolitan vantage point was not available to her before arriving at college.

Complexity

The second aspect of the New Commons is complexity. The students spoke of the complex situations of their commons, with a great deal of attention focused on capitalism, especially macro-capitalism, and related to that the recent economic downturn in Maine and

its small towns. Recall Sarah's political identify as a debater-of-issues, but that she and her best friend – a conservative – have agreed to subjugate their political debates to preserve their friendship. Amanda's and Robb's profiles provide issues on which they present coherent, conflicting approaches. Amanda wants a lucrative career with amply family leave, to have a strong professional presence, yet wants to be a ready nurturer for her children. Robb wants to invoke the political protests moments of the 1960s, but believes these to be irrelevant to today's political leadership, maybe to today's political climate. Sharon's and Nate's study of political science lacks consistency with their preferred career path, which might have been grounded in a different academic discipline.

In Bert's profile, he spoke of the split affinity he holds for the economic health of his hometown and for environmental issues. As related to our domestic economic strength, Bert doesn't "sense any urgency from this administration. The fact they've, they have such widespread support in the country that it makes me feel like I'm out of place here." He reflected on the effects on the region "after the railroads went down, lumber's kind of scaled back, this place has really dried up." And as he eulogized a region of the state economically dependent upon the pulp and paper industries, the complexity of balancing economic and environmental issues is present. Recall from his profiles that he sees that "places like Maine are...suffering a little right now – the paper mills are going under, but on the other side of it, the rivers will clean up in a while."

Economic Downturn in Maine

What is capitalism? A common assumption holds that Adam Smith's (1776) The Wealth of Nations is centered on a contemporary understanding of market-driven, consumer economies. Wealth of Nations does advance the merits of free enterprise in domestic, local markets, but on the whole, his landmark book is a manifesto against mercantilism –

controlled trade between the mother-country (in this context, Great Britain) and its colonies or protectorates, benefiting at each exchange the mother-country. Smith advocates for international free trade and promotes appropriate divisions of labor and trade unhampered by tariffs, customs, or quotas. With some curiosity, he also insisted that increasing the amount of money does not make a community more prosperous – that genuine trade should benefit all parties.

In its application, capitalism, which is often considered to be local or international, can also be regional (Buchanan & Flowers, 1987; Lekachman & Van Loon, 1981). While his comments were generally positive about capitalism as a concept, Robb said of capitalism

> I think it's horrible that in this country there are people that go hungry while Bill Gates has billions of dollars, or while even the government will spend billions of dollars on bombs and planes to drop those bombs. I think it boils down ... a little more humanity. I think there is a medium in between that,

while Jack responded,

> Capitalism. Bad news. What a bad news deal. I've got a real problem with pure capitalism. I think its very corrupting. I just think that the acquisition of large amounts of money – I don't even see a point to it. I don't understand why some people feel like they need so much, all the time. And what capitalism has allowed us to do as a nation....

When speaking about the economic decline, Amanda's small hometown, and others like it, are experiencing, both Amanda and Nate are in agreement. From two opposite ends of the state, and from hometowns with drastically different economic opportunities, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "Two Maines." Nate refers to his hometown,

> as a small town. They've always had, at least sort of, an economic vitality. The problem was keeping investment and keeping the businesses there. They just built this huge industrial park, just off the highway ... the point is to try to make Gardiner a place where CEOs or big business can feel like they can come and feel small town life. That's always been half the attraction of Maine, it's a great place to raise your children, so move here, you entrepreneur. You'll have a

> great company, and have all your employees here, having a better way of life.

Meanwhile, Amanda noticed the Northern region of the state is "bleeding. ...the whole Maine paper-making industries – I was just reading in the news yesterday that Old Town, the Old Town mill is losing 300 jobs. ... god, it's just depressing, I guess. You can't make a good living." Nate soberly commended that

> I don't know what they're going to have to do about it. On the one hand, you can push for economic ... this conundrum. You can push for economic development in Maine, and you're going to hear it from people in Northern Maine ... "Why can't we have more companies come up here, more business development in our area?" Yet they still want to hang on to their way of life and the natural resources. Northern Maine is going to have to give up some concessions.

Finally, recognizing the irony, a student who I previously identified as primarily interested in international affairs and pleased with the progress of the Republican agenda since the 2000 election, provided an apropos commentary about a declining domestic economy. His summary encapsulates an aspect of the modern economic complexity. He did, however, recognize that privilege begets opportunity which further privileges select citizens. With sage observation, Nathan suggested

> it feels like we're returning to the Robber Barons, forced segregation, forced urbanization that was part of the United States in the 19th century. The privilege [of college] gives choices of professions [and] gives options of location, but if you don't have it, your options are getting smaller all the time ... and it's stratifying out. You can either have these options, or you don't and you're stuck. You don't see any way out. Your kids grow up in that culture, I guess, and they don't see any way up.

Different Expectations

An interesting aspect of individual presence in a community is the recognition one feels. Sharon described the support she feels from her church, and suggested that "all that would be burdensome if I wasn't doing well. Then I would feel like, oh, my god, I'm

disappointing people." Many of the participants recognized the privilege they enjoy; those comments are reflected in the Compassion section, again paralleling the aspects attributable to Parks Daloz, et al. (1996). But Amanda, the child of a "mother [who] is a 26- or 27-year elementary teacher [and a] father, now the superintendent of the school district I grew up in," described an appreciable role she sensed she and her family had in her small town. She reflected on feeling

> well, not mad, but disgusted, that mom and I would go grocery shopping, and we'd see kids who would say, Ms. Walker, what are you doing out of school? She wanted to say, hi, guys, I do have a life outside of school. But you're held to a different social, you know, kind of standard, because of the job you have.

Her "parents have a mixed set of friends. They're not all teachers and educators. I was exposed to a lot of people with an education, but I conversely spent time with people who didn't." Despite the connection with people in different life circumstances, she reflected on the influence from having

> dated a guy for a while in high school; his parents both worked in the Dexter shoe plant in Milo. And their family, they were very smart, very intelligent people but they had a very different life perspective, than what I had grown up in. And being around their family, even though we were in the same town, the same ... whatever, it was just a very different way of life than I was accustomed to. And sort of, that was a wake up call; this isn't what I want to do. I don't want to have a job where I have to work for fifty weeks – you know, you get two weeks off – and you're working 7:00 in the morning until, whatever, in a hot factory. It's not the hours that bothers me, but, you know, but I'd much rather be in an office, doing brain work.

Pre-War Protests

Among the context that must be acknowledged during the study was the beginning and prosecution of an attack intended to remove Saddam Hussein as the political leader of Iraq (Poniewozik, 2003, Ratnesar, 2003). The first several weeks of 2003 saw large protests around the globe, protests directed against the belligerent stance proffered by the United

States government toward Saddam Hussein and Iraq (Mangan, 2003; Tyrangiel, 2003; Young, 2003). Jack suggested the threat of war could be a ploy, that the administration

> thought we could scare them our way. That was the plan. But that was so different because that was ideological. Ideal situation ... you couldn't scare them out of their beliefs, but Saddam Hussein, you might be able to scare him out of his hole. So, I can see how this could work, and I hope that is what he's trying to do, but I don't think so. I think in the end, he is mongering.

One of the more fun perspectives about the pre-war protests came, to my surprise, from Dewey. His commission in the U.S. Army provided context as well as dismissal to the relevance of protesting. He observed that protesting includes

> a definite aspect of it that its more for the fun of it than anything else. Let's face it, defying authority is pretty fun. Going out, holding a sign, standing in front of something, and screaming at people, that's fun, and it's kind of cool.

While being careful not to "label protesting in general [as] un-American," he concluded,

> I think the protests are counterproductive. I think that if you want Saddam to disarm, there has to be pressure put on him. Part of that pressure is a threat. With protests going around everywhere, it cuts down on that threat. So, I think it, I think it might be a little counterproductive... and actually making the likelihood of war a little [greater].

Ryan was impressed and reflective about

> the rally they had in Bangor a couple of weeks ago. They had like 400, 500 people. It blew my mind – it was refreshing to see. The rallies all over the world, the country. I've certainly never seen it before in my lifetime. My parents can remember it, the 60s and 70s, but my generation should be saying "wow!" I think it's escaped most of us [young people]; it went right over our heads that we're seeing something like this, which is too bad. It's one of the larger examples of political participation by people in the last three decades.

One of the concerns the students identified was the value of protesting. Robb relayed that

> we talked about it in our class ... we talked about whether this signals an end to the effectiveness of demonstrations I wasn't around in the '60s and '70s, but those did have an effect. People stood up and took notice. Today it's so easy to dismiss it. Maybe its because the attention span of Americans is so short – they'll forget about this the next time an election comes around – it won't matter.

A greater eulogy for protesting was offered by Nate, who said

> even if you consider the fact that those type of movements, those protest movements, are passé now. You feel like they don't change anything, they don't have an effect because so many generations before have done it. I don't think they'll have an effect at all on the administration's policies, as far as we're going to war,

while Ryan suggested that the sadness in the protests was the youth were not appreciating the phenomenon that was occurring, Nate suggested the sadness was that youth perceive no efficacy in protesting:

> the generation you're talking about now kind of sees that, recognizes that those types of movements, yeah, they may have worked a few years ago, or maybe they never worked at all.

Jack expressed frustration at the complacency of his colleagues, explaining that

> we got into a conversation about the protests from the weekend before. I was shocked at how conservative the class way. Not only that; while they are saying, they're saying this school is extremely liberal. And I'm sitting there and thinking: "you've got to be kidding me! This is a liberal school? We've got like ten people in a class of twenty talking about how protests are stupid! Protests shouldn't happen!? Those [anti-war] people don' know what they want!? Are you kidding me?

Homeland Security and the Patriots Act

Accompanying the concerns about the war, the protest movement identified a perceived loss of civil rights. Nate commented about

> you know, the Patriot Act – even the name, think about it – is so unpatriotic. Individual rights is [an important part of] patriotism – having respect for personal liberties, personal freedoms. I don't know if it's un-American but there's something that definitely isn't right about it, to go around suspecting all your own fellow citizens or just looking for that suspicion out there. It does seem a little contradictory

> that we're being taught to be suspicious of everybody else. That's un-American.

Similarly, Robb stated

> I think is a horrible, horrible thing. It seems that there are a lot better ways than, as far as I'm concerned, than spying on your own. I know what's going on. I think that after Watergate, people really started to distrust the government, to think they would do something like that. That someone in that position would need to do something like that. I think right now, checking library books that people check out, I think we're giving up a lot of liberties to do something that maybe we don't understand.

Their comments pave the way for a presentation on students' thoughts about the Patriot Act (2001). Three other students said:

- But, I've got to be honest, I'm not nearly as scared of terrorists as I am of my own government, most of the time.
- I'm scared of my government. I was listening to Tom Ridge the other day. That whole thing smacks of KGB, like nobody's business, the whole idea of domestic spying.
- When they are paying students in university, public works people, when they are telling people to watch their neighbors, when they are paying people to know what others around them just think ... It scares the crap out of me.

These young citizens' perceptions indict their government. Jack reflected,

> we tried so hard, always, to split the CIA, FBI, they are not part of the same ... And now we say they didn't talk to each other enough? That's why they didn't know what was going to happen? It's kind of the way we set it up. We designed it so the CIA can't do anything here. People don't understand that that was one of that got Nixon into big trouble, doing it in the 70s, using military intelligence on the anti-war movement. People don't hear that, people don't know that. What was it, one-out-of-three of the anti-war movement leaders were informants, for the federal government. The idea that, you can, the whole problem of fighting communism in the Cold War, that real peasant revolution can be put down. Like a real change, when peasants want to change, I don't believe you can actually stop that.

Similarly, Sharon questioned,

> if you make that protection where do you stop? Pretty soon you're not allowed to, can't question politicians, can't question the government. We can't go there, can't do that.

Other questions of civil rights were addressed in the context of the flag burning or other signs of reverence for the U.S. Flag. Reflecting on the actions of Toni Smith, a college athlete who performed a quiet, dignified protest during pregame national anthem ceremonies (Slezak, 2003; Wiley, 2003), Nate described the sentiments of

> one of my roommates [who] just went ballistic: "I can't believe that bitch!" this, this, and this. "That's so unbelievable, so rude." "Why doesn't she recognize the people that have died for your freedom?" "That's disrespectful." So, I say, you know what, you're disrespectful of her right to be disrespectful.
>
> Don't we all have that right as Americans? I respect the fact that everyone is entitled to their opinion, that burning the flag ... I don't agree with people trying to stop people from doing it. Trying to, trying to limit you personally, your liberties.

Ryan reflected on the flag, that

> to say you can't burn the flag goes against the ideals of what makes us a country. We rebelled against a higher authority, to burn the flag. To say now we can't do it would be an insult to the people who founded this country. We've put it on a pedestal, sometimes; put it up there with the greatest of things and said you can't attack it.

The concerns of the participants about civil rights, as reflected in the Patriot Act (2001) and the sentiment to preserve the U.S. flag, are summarized nicely by Ryan, who observed,

> obviously the government is spying on each other, to make sure that people aren't telling other people. They're always doing it, but when they start spying on everybody else.

He suggested those who would limit the rights to protest, to exercise "civil disobedience" have "always got those negative connotations attached. For them, it's always about money, about greed and power, and those things people are less inclined to identify

with or support nowadays." Alas, civil liberties must always be balanced with the needs of the state. Most of the student participants in the study believe we have moved too far.

Why war?

Student attitudes toward the war, and maybe as importantly, the changing attitudes toward civil rights with the election of the Republican Administration and the aftermath of September 11. Sarah recognized the complexity of the war, suggesting,

> I don't think anyone really wants this war. The difference is between those who think its necessary for humanitarian responses and those who think it's completely unnecessary – the people that think it's right or the people that think it's wrong.
>
> [Some people] want to compare this war to World War II, as a just war. [There are some] comparisons going on to history, but you don't ever see the whole picture. I think it's one of those things you can debate until you're blue in the face, but the end result is some people will just think its necessary, and some people will just think its completely unnecessary. They'll think this is a mistake. I can identify more with the people who think it's wrong ...

while Jack addressed the Blood-for-Oil argument, that "it's for Oil and it's not for Oil. They also have bigger fish to fry than getting the rights for oil." He then refined the motivation for hostilities to being "all about daddy – we're talking about personal family failures.... He started talking about Iraq as soon as the election was over." Amanda was sympathetic to this perception, hypothesizing

> a piece of him, that feels, like any child would, he wanted to finish what his parent started, you're going to try to improve your father's legacy or reputation. I think this is a huge, it's a pivotal point in old Junior's presidency.

She was able to balance her thoughts about the family connection with the arguments for removing

> Saddam [who has not been] a kind leader, even to his own people. He had repeatedly gone against international law. I think that he was sort of a loose cannon, but, I don't know. I read a piece that said "why do we think that democracy will work?" Well, they've never had a chance

> to see it. For years and years and years, they've either been occupied, or governed with no choice.
>
> I have sort of mixed feelings. I agree ... I think that something needed to be done. Let's give them a shot at it. Let's liberate them. Whatever. But I think once you give them all the tools, then they've got to sink or swim on their own. And I think if in ten or fifteen years, we're back in a similar situation ... sometimes it is what it is. You can't make it democratic.

Sense of Community

Ernest Boyer (1990) offered six pillars of community. Its application in student affairs work elevates one of his seminal contributions, In Search of Community. He articulated six elements of community: purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative. As illustrated by participants, each student identified their home to some degree to be a focus of community. Ryan told a compelling story that further suggests his New England village home was meaningful.

> My folks told me a story. I don't remember this but we were – my sister and I were three and four years old. The town did a lot of things, like there was a big pond in the center of town, and people would go skating there on the weekends. There would be a big fire on shore and people would come and would leave their kids there, with a couple of the older folks in town. The kids would kind of hang around the fire and play with the old folks while the parents would go off, do some skating, and it kind of rotated, who was watching the kids. It's just that idea, community, everybody watching out for everyone else. And it's – my dad was part of the fire department, and seeing the way people reached when a house burned down. People would be there before the first trucks left with stuff, cloths, necessary things. You're – community is just pretty much a given.

Sharon described the source of her sense of community with simplicity: member of the church in Philadelphia will "do whatever they can to help me succeed." When probed about the youth of the church who show less of a commitment to the church as they grow into adulthood, Sharon postulated,

> a lot of them, they don't go anymore. But ... the one time a year that they come back to church, they can see that nothing has really

> changed. They are still a part of the family, and ... oh, yeah, it's unconditional.

Sarah, for whom political action is found in arguing about political matters, chooses not to argue with her best friend, with whom she does not agree on most things political. She explained that "these are the friends I grew up with and I'm still acquainted with them. I'm friends with them because they know me so well, not necessarily because their values match mine."

Jack defines community with deference to "Rousseau's longest and most durable epoch ... conjugal and parental love. Those you kill and those you love. If you do those two things, what else do you need, you know?" It is an intellectual argument for Jack; he is able to detach himself from the extreme dualism he described. He also provided some explanation for how he has come to develop his principled perspective. Like Sharon, he attributes much of his socialization to the

> church when we were growing up – Genesis – catholic church for people who are not in the catholic ... you know, family reasons, whatever. It was a very liberal church ... It was an amazing community, very geared toward community and compassion.

His story centered on two people, a local radio personality – portraying a publicly catholic identity – and a nun who worked with the church. His story contains elements of compassion, commitment, and disillusion with authority, suggesting first that

> nuns tend to be pretty liberal, for the most part. [The radio host] was a volunteer at the planned parenthood, and the bishop excommunicated her. And he said any church who gives her communion will be disbanded. Genesis, of course, we took her in, we had just gotten a new priest – I was like 11, maybe – that priest went straight to the bishop. The nun really stuck with the community, but he went right to the bishop, and kind of turned us in for the anti-hierarchical things we had been doing. So we got disbanded and excommunicated. So the church members started meeting then on Sundays, in a soup kitchen in Providence. We'd have services in the morning then in the afternoon, we were working in the soup kitchen, just doing our thing.

> That was such a great community. And almost all of the family-friends we have are from that church.

A Sense of Community is, thus, an explanation for the participation exhibited by the students in this study. It cannot be ignored, but neither can it be separated from its other components. To represent this, community is recognized as a key ingredient but is documented as a companion component with the participants' influences, awareness, and identification of issues.

Compassion

All participants in this study expressed thoughts about their awareness of the world as a global community. Of course, Nathan described his perception of the American image being projected abroad, Bert blames President G. W. Bush for "ruin[ing] our relationship with Europe," and Sarah expressed concern about the effect of the war on our international image. Amanda identified with women's issues and Jack presented as a person "happy working for civil rights law, immigration law, race or women's rights, universal freedom, whatever. Just being part of a movement, a progressive thing going on." From her position as the only student of color, from her heavy involvement in campus life, diversity training, and community service, Sharon provided rich comments. She values situations with

> someone saying, "I don't know," or "I'm ignorant, I need help;" saying, "help me, teach me to understand what I can do to make this better." That is one of the most admirable things you can say. That's one of the things I really admire about [students involved in service learning]. They're just so willing to do, to step outside of their comfort zone.

Congruent with U.S. Representative Charles Rangel's (2003) assertion that military service provides one avenue of social and multicultural education, that "getting to know Americans from all backgrounds has to make you a better American ... it makes you care

more about your country" (p. 121), Dewey suggested a cultural awareness results from military deployment. He reflected

> it used to be that soldiers, they didn't know anything beyond the United States or their hometown, but people now, they've been all over the place. They've been to – most soldiers you talk to – they've been to the Balkans, they've been Korea, they've been to the Middle East, they've been to Europe, at least the good part of Europe. They speak a little of all of those languages, and you talk to them and they seem to have formed most of their impressions of the cultures, based upon the places that tourists wouldn't visit. But still, they understand the culture and they have respect for it. I think it's just a result of the fact that they're getting sent everywhere.

The students in the study reflected a desire to help others, whether on a grand or small scale. Nate, who wants to work in local levels of governance as a hired, not elected, professional, still spoke of his wishes in a recent election, "hoping we'd see more social programs, more in the way of educational funding, less of big business." The compassion expressed by the participants is presented in this section, consistent with the third chapter in Common Fire (Parks Daloz, et al., 1996). The four categories presented here are feminism and women's safety, racism and affirmative action, religion, and privilege. These four elements of social justice reflected the interests of the participants and, simultaneously, a recognition of the privilege they enjoy.

Women's Leadership and Safety

Throughout our time together, Amanda consistently described her feelings for women's leadership, equality of rights, and the freedom for women to make life choices. Her comments could very well be placed within the context of her profile, for sadly, she was the only student to speak as diligently on these issues. One of the complexities in Amanda's life is evaluating her socialization and the methods available for obtaining her social goal of women's equality.

For her, the big political issue is "a woman's right to choose," which presents an opportunity for another complexity, one that she has resolved. She explained,

> I feel strongly about a woman's right to choose. That's big to me. I was also brought up in the Methodist Church but that never was, really, a struggle. I didn't really even think about the religious end of it. I don't like the idea of somebody else telling me or telling somebody else what they can or can't do. That is a really personal decision. I think that should be left up to the person that is involved.

We began discussing community service opportunities for Amanda, and began discussing a woman's health clinic in the area, which elicited,

> Gee! I never knew about the level of security and things that they have there. You can't even get in the door unless you have called them previously, ahead, and have an appointment. Then I think, duh, of course they have to have that kind of level of security. Personal opinion aside, I can't imagine why anyone would want to harass and intimidate such a personal and ...
>
> You make [that kind of] choice because you think it's right. I don't care what you do after that, though. I hate that, horribly, someone else telling you. God forbid you're going there for anything else, a fertility treatment, a regular exam, anything. It's unreal, amazing.

Parental and personal attitude about feminism.

Amanda's father is a contributor to her strength of opinion and the complexity she described about feminism. Included in her profile is an example of her sometimes contradictory, yet insightful comments on gender roles. Abrahamy, Blake Finkelson, Lydon, and Murray (2003) recognized the widely held and logical belief that parents play a significant role in "shaping" a child's gender role behavior. About her father's views on programs that assist or ensure access for women, Amanda stated:

> I think ... I wouldn't want, any extra or special treatment just because of being female. I don't think he thinks any less of my ability to succeed in any way, that I am just as capable as any other person, and would not want something like gender ... you know, he would be the first person to stand up and say, "don't discount this person because of that."

Amanda recognized that he supervises several women in his role as superintendent. She argued that he "would never put a barrier to any teacher's career, obviously, to have children," but that he doesn't fully comprehend the oppression women experience. In point of fact, I'm not certain Amanda admitted to having such a comprehension herself. She suggests that

> my father doesn't think that any of them will admit that gender has any impact. That's his, off-the-cuff ... they wouldn't want to admit it's made any sort of difference. He definitely sees my mother as an equal.
>
> Maybe he perceives that women feel they've had to work harder to prove themselves, and they don't want to say, "yeah, it's harder." I think he would say that women don't want to admit that it has any ... it's that they are not willing. I really don't know why he thinks that women would be unwilling to say that things are different, or that they have a different perspective on something just because of gender instead of other backgrounds. That goes against what everybody else has found, people who are willing to talk about the differences in the issues.

As evidenced, Amanda continues to explore the freedoms and the restrictions, the opportunities and barriers, for women in contemporary society. The thought of having a family and raising children punctuated her comments, and she worries about how to balance work and family. "I know lots of successful women who do both," she said, "but there should be more of them, I think."

Religion

Four students noted the influence of church on their lives; all four made reference to Christian churches. Jack's experience with the Christian church in which he was raised helped to free him from the strict construction of hierarchical decision-making. For Sharon, the church symbolizes – or indeed is the foundation – of her community. I asked her to describe for me how church represented community, separate from worship. She instantly replied,

> it's not really for me about the relationships with others, because I go to church up here, too, where I'm not really a part of the church community. I believe that "in that place where two or three are gathered," so I want to go to a place where there are other believers.

Her religion and race have a curious interplay in her activities of choice. She explained that she

> went to a conference over Christmas. It was put together by a group called "Impact," a kind of a subset of Campus Crusade for Christ, but their focus is on African American students. There were like 5000 people who look just like me, same age group. It was just amazing to be in that presence, in that atmosphere, just all the time. For one thing, you could hear people praying and singing all the time.
>
> Its just so, so much different when you're around people who are like that all the time. Just an amazing experience. I miss it.

Sharon described the career possibilities within the organization, one that combines her interest in working with youth, race, and religion. She wonders if she is "spiritually ready for it, because it's really a commitment." Of course, Nathan is the child of Christian missionaries and Amanda, too, was

> raised religiously, but I guess I don't know where that sort of fits it for me at this point. I'm not at the point where I'm saying there's no god, but ... my family is probably more spiritual than I am.

Neither Nathan nor Amanda further identified religion as an important source of community.

Racism and Affirmative Action

Both sadly and without surprise, the student most concerned with and most prepared to discuss race and racism was Sharon, the only person of color in this study. From her profile, it is clear that teaching her colleagues and other students about racial diversity is an important aspect of her journey to student leadership. This self-anointed responsibility does not end for her when she is at home, with friends. She described a situation where "we were just talking about issues on campus, racial issues, sexism. Just a whole bunch of

different things," when a friend had said something inappropriate, Sharon confronted her on it. She explained,

> a lot of people [say I] love to argue. I'm one of those people, anything I'm passionate about, I will debate and debate and debate for hours. Everyone was trying to argue me down, [but my point is that] people judge you, sometimes, on the things you say, and the use of that word... So, we argued for hours.

The U.S. Supreme Court, concurrent with this study, was considering two Affirmative Action cases involving the University of Michigan, (Grutter v. Bollinger [U.S. 02-241] and Gratz v. Bollinger [02-516]). Describing the conversation he had with fellow political science majors in class one day, Jack explained his outrage at the lack of consciousness about race or economic freedom that other students demonstrated:

> and I was like, okay, take a breath. Have a thought. Your wife is having a baby. Your baby could just as easily be popping out of some woman in India. That baby has just as much of a right as you do, as I do, regardless of how much money you have.

Robb sees the notion of race as an international, rather than domestic agenda. Like Nathan, he lived abroad as a child. He does not attribute the same level of social learning to the military that Dewey described, however:

> I thought the schooling was fine, I thought the kids were fine. As far as world politics, I think our presence in a place like Saudi Arabia, or somewhere that is so totally different, culturally, is sometimes a problem. I think there should be more cultural training in the military.

As described in his profile, Ryan disagrees with the budgetary priority of his sport at the university, which he sees as a Title IX and affirmative action response. Nathan responded that

> I think affirmative action as an end to itself is racist. I think when you have to make a decision and any part of the decision is based on race, on the color of skin or background, is keeping alive the things you're trying to do away with. We realize how wrong racism was, and what happened, and that it's not the right thing to do and we need to stop it. But to use race as a factor in our decision, it keeps alive that

> mentality. I don't think it's helpful. I know it does its part; it has, or it had, its place. But no, I'm not in favor of it.

However, Sharon, always teaching about race, described a conversation she had with another student, a white male. First providing the caveat, "I don't like to talk about affirmative action, really, with anyone, because people don't have a firm grasp on what it really is," she then depicted her frustration that he could not answer her charge, that

> he was just ... he couldn't tell me. I was like, if you've got these two candidates, one is a white male and the other is a Latina female. They have the same qualifications, are exactly the same in terms of experiences, education, everything to the letter. Who are you going to hire? And he was saying ...well ...
>
> And I was like, "well, what!?" People want to be around people who are just like them. So if all the people that are hiring this new person are white males, they want somebody that can go to the country clubs with them and can belong to all the same things that they do. But who is the person who is going to enrich the company, make things ... shake things up a little bit, it'll be the Latina female. And he was saying, "oh, that's not fair." Well, what else are you going to judge them on? If they're the same in every other aspect, what? He couldn't answer me.

Privilege

The student participants in this study clearly the students enjoy different levels of prosperity. Robb is pensive about the privilege he recognizes. He

> started as a political science and sociology major, and was very interested in social mobility, things like that. I took a graduate/undergraduate course ... it was about social mobility. And we had to write our life stories, pretty much, all through the lens of sociology.

He explained that he "come[s] from a fairly-working-class family, lower working class," Robb continues, explaining that he has "put [himself] through college working two jobs or what-not, at various times." Working the same sort of schedules, Bert complains less about the job at the Dunkin' Donuts where he works, although he dislikes that they "always have FoxNews on." FoxNews proves to be Bert's major source of news, albeit news

packaged, he complains, with a bias with which he disagrees (see Franken's, 2003, commentary about Fox News Channel).

Amanda recognizes her privilege. She delineated a number of options for her year off, before she starts law school, noting that

> I'm not in a financial position that I need to work, to save the money, which again, I'm very fortunate. I'd like to work, to do something, you know, more than bagging groceries, or whatever. Something meaningful, you know, interesting.
>
> I want to work toward being community-focused. I think it wouldn't be incredibly selfish of me to end up, being able to take care of myself, my family, all of those things, if I can't turn around and help somebody else who hasn't had it as easy because of circumstance. Things maybe beyond their control have prevented them from achieving what they want to achieve, achieving the happy, comfortable. I don't think I'd be able to enjoy what I had, maybe, unless I felt like what I was doing ... trying to give back, time-wise, talent-wise. I think that has been modeled by my parents. Both of them are involved in community activities, through church, through the Kiwanis. Its sort of, that satisfaction they get from giving what they have, back.

Succinctly, Jack explained that

> my parents never had money, but I always felt like I had a privileged upbringing. They made supreme sacrifices for education. So I always felt like I couldn't do something that was not of use to more people than just me. It wasn't just me who brought me to this point, so I owe something to somebody else.

He credited his parents' value systems for his educational opportunities, and explains his own value system, noting,

> I have no real desire to make a lot of money. I take Aristotle's warnings very seriously, when he talked about money. You cannot acquire large amounts of money and not be corrupt. He is very emphatic about that. The best thing to do is to inherit lots of money because then you don't have to do horrible things. You get to be this wonderful person with all your money, but if you have to work to get that money, you're going to be an ass.

Dewey contemplated the opportunity pursuing a military career provided. His hometown community did not encourage college. He challenged the assumption of high school students automatically going to college, suggesting

> it's partially privilege, and it's partially just what your society expects you to do. I'll be honest with you, I think a lot of people who go to college immediately after high school should have just gotten a job, because, they waste their time and our time and money and their parents' money, just, um, partying. They could have partied a lot cheaper at home.

Privilege for Dewey is illustrated by his junior college experience. He attended a military institution, where he earned an associates degree and a commission,

> but there was also this high school attached to it, and it was filled with the kind of kids who get sent to military high school. In other words, they were very rich kids who had screwed up in a major way. And a lot of them, the judges basically made a deal with their parents that they would send them to a juvenile detention facility, or their parents could pay to send them to a private military school. So they were basically these rich kids whose parents could afford to send them to that kind of school, and they were just screwing up again, and again, and again, and again.
>
> And it really pissed me off because I realized that if they had come from any of the rests of us, our backgrounds, and they had done, had made the decisions they had did, we'd be in pretty serious trouble. But they, because their parents could fund them and all their problems ... I guess a similar thing with politics, or any sort of professional degrees, is that, yes, people with richer parents who can afford to send them to various places, can get them whatever. I mean, we have dumb doctors, and dumb lawyers, because their parents have paid for them to go everywhere. I don't see how you could ever eliminate that.

Summary: Meaning of Understanding Political Systems

Reprising and formalizing the themes of Political Awareness, Political Influences, and Relevant Issues, this chapter portrays the meanings students in political science attribute to their political participation. The meaning the participants attribute to their political

involvement is heavily grounded in awareness. There is a pride that comes from their chosen discipline. Amanda recalled,

> I remember learning my freshman year learning the difference between the British system and the American system of government. And going home over break, I was with some of my parents' friends, and one woman was like, "how can you ... that's just so dry." "That's so boring." "I hated government in high school." "That's why I didn't take any of those classes in college." And I think, "how can you not care about that?" that's important to me.

The student-participants demonstrated their awareness of politics in several ways. The first were statements of expectation they have of themselves and of citizens within a democracy, including being informed and being an active participant in the voting process. Some thoughts representative of this generation are portrayed, among those the roles – perhaps diminished – that political parties play vis-à-vis ideological beliefs. The students recognized a number of influences on their political development, including their families and communities, various conventional political experiences, and the news and the media. Some of the participants diligently seek different sources of news, and others consume that news that is convenient to them. They spoke of the bias they perceive in various new sources. Finally, this chapter illustrates some of the issues important to the student-participants. Identifying categorizing themes of the New Commons, sources of Community, Compassion, the connections and complexity experienced by the students is explored. They reminisce of small, failing town and the senses of community that empower them. Robb explained that "I talk politics a lot with people, a lot of time people like to talk politics with me," while Nathan "thinks a lot about politics. Just daily, walking around, it seems to be something that pops into my mind, " 'what's Powell going to do at the UN,' things like that." Participants' comments on socially relevant current events include topics related to social justice, the war, and civil rights.

There is meaning in their choices, although Sarah concluded, "I'm not sure why [politics] has an allure. I haven't really...I've thought about it, but it hasn't struck. It's exciting sometimes. My bottom line is that you've got to make a difference." The ten students in this study all described ways in which they view politics, their political identity, and their place in either the political system or their communities. Their comments demonstrate the self-identified political influences that have affected their political awareness, as well as identifying the relevant issues begged by their political awareness.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

This research examines the political influences upon, levels of awareness of, and the interpretation of issues by traditional-age political science majors at a New England university. The purpose of this case study research is to understand how college seniors make meaning of their own political participation. Ten students – three women, seven men – responded to an invitation to participate in a series of individual interviews that were conversational in format. Each meeting included questions and member-checking to ensure accuracy of data collected, and the authenticity of personal histories and case studies that represent the meaning participants assign to their political development.

This final chapter includes three components. The first is a re-presentation of the purpose and approach of this research, at whose center were the research questions for this project:

How do political science majors make meaning of personal political activity?

How do participants interpret their political behavior and activity?

How did study participants learn about or decide to be involved in politics and political activities?

What motivates study participants to consider political activism or the lack of it?

Questions reflecting the understanding student participants have of their own political awareness and influences were asked in conversational interviews. Constructivism, the paradigm driving this research, asserts that personal experience and socially-constructed meanings result in a multiplicity of realities, a diversity of knowledge. The various meanings

presented by the students were collected, reflected back to students, and were used to develop a useful means to display the findings. Their responses populate the two chapters of findings presented in this project.

Second, conclusions from these student-cited meanings are drawn and presented. These Syntheses of Findings are presented according to three general categories, which provide a framework for portraying students' understanding of their political motivations. The loose, developing themes of Political Awareness, Political Influences, and Relevant Issues resonated within this research. Finally, the chapter then includes implications of this research, both to student affairs practice and for further research.

Syntheses of Findings

Political decisions result from a symbiosis between each person's personal level of awareness of politics and political systems and one's political influences. This political awareness is formed through accumulated and accepted influences, and is strengthened and entrenched as this awareness then dictates future political influences the person likely will seek. Together, awareness and influences shape citizens' understandings and interpretations of current issues.

The issues noted in this project were defined by the students in relation to their past influences and their awareness. To ease in their identification, these findings are in bold. Because of the fluidity of the three components, some categorical crossover of the findings is inevitable. The discussion under each of these three components includes a reflection of student comments and relevant literature.

Political Awareness

Several democratic models have been theorized, models that address varied views of an appropriate balance between state and individual. Students majoring in political science

reasonably would have been exposed to an array of democratic notions. A sample of democratic notions representing the range of approaches was presented in the literature review, and it was rightly assumed students could be conversant about the issue of balance between state and individual. Five key findings from this study are related to the understanding participants expressed about their democratic government:

1. **Participants expect citizens to be knowledgeable about political systems and current issues and for developing a sense of patriotism. Importantly, there is latitude in how that patriotism might be understood or expressed.**

Participants expected other citizens to cultivate and demonstrate political awareness. As political science majors, participants identified civic participation as important, and the literature surrounding the public's role in democratic decision-making categorically is premised on knowledgeable citizens (see Mendel-Reyes, 1998). The second aspect of this finding is the expectation participants have of their fellow citizens to develop and exhibit a sense of patriotism. The interviews demonstrated participants are patriotic. They exhibited pride in the U.S. and their citizenship, appreciation for their upbringing, and gratitude for the opportunity of democracy. Simultaneously, several participants exhibited a wariness of current governmental decision-making. Such questioning is congruent with citizen participation, an oft-cited example being Madison (1787-1788/1982). Respecting multiplicity of views, ideas, and interpretations and holding important the value compromise, he argued, fosters stability and inclusion in a free society.

2. **Participants expressed that the franchise – that is, the right to vote – is to be exercised and appreciated for its gatekeeper role in legitimizing future complaints about policy decisions.**

This finding speaks to the "vote or shut up" mentality voiced by some citizens, a sentiment also expressed by several participants. Notably, there is some complexity surrounding this issue. In part, this finding contradicts the latitude of expression of political participation noted in the first finding. They tended – just as does the literature of their academic discipline – to reduce political participation to limited activities such as voting and campaigning.

Political involvement literature indicates that social location, psychological effects, structural barriers, or a rational choice analysis effects voter participation. Ill-prepared to recognize their own privilege, participants expressed dismay when asked for reasons citizens did not participate. Several participants suggested that those who do not vote have little moral right to complain about their government. Even so, none of the participants was prepared to diminish anyone's constitutionally-protected right to speak out against policy decisions or even the government. In general,

3. **participants supported each citizen's right to speak, to protest, or to be heard.**

Notably, political demonstrations have a long and significant place in the history of the nation, including the history of institutions of higher learning (see Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Beeler, 1985; Boren, 2001; Buhle, 1989; Cohen, 1989; delli Carpini, 1986; David, 2003; Gitlin, 1987; Green & Astin, 1985; Foley, 2001; Hamrick, 1998; Klatch, 1999; Miser, 1988; Rhoads, 1997a, 1998a; Rodriquez, 2001; Rudolph, 1962/1999). Recognizing that students perceive this democratic activity as one now having diminished effectiveness suggests the appropriateness for further research, research to better understand students' and citizens' perspectives on this traditional means of social change.

4. **Party identification is not valued; one can operate in the political system without identifying with or committing to one particular party.**

Participants were comfortable and confident in their abilities to identify political party initiatives, although they saw party politics as being internally inconsistent and the parties' agendas as uncompelling. Such a finding concurs with political science-based literature addressing political parties, which widely concludes Americans' loyalty to and trust in party politics is waning. Participants expressed this conclusion not only through their choice of electoral candidates, but volunteered that other orthodox political experiences have come from cross-party experiences. Furthermore, several students identified themselves as political independents; these students and others who are affiliated with one of the political parties described party politics as an inefficient way to conduct oppositional policy initiatives.

5. **More progressive students had a lower sense of political efficacy, evidenced by their responses concerning the result of the 2000 presidential and 2002 mid-term elections; the 2003 Iraqi war and pre-war protests; and the national – and importantly, the regional – economy.**

These are three of the more pointed political issues that dominate recent or contemporary mainstream political news. However, participants in large part recognized Bush v. Gore (U.S.S.C. 00-504; 00-836; 00-837; 00-942; & 00-949) as routine, rather than the "coup" (Cobbie, 2001; also see Bugliosi, 2001; Kaplan, 2001; Tapper, 2001) others have suggested best describes it. Conversations with the participants about the 2002 election were primarily focused on state races. Prevailing comments about election day choices were grounded in a sense of personal connections participants felt to the candidates, such as Sarah's connection to a high school teacher who provided political training, and Robb, Amanda, and Nate's personal identification with the Senator.

Students demonstrated adept perceptions about the war in Iraq, and notably, the global protests occurring prior to the war's prosecution. The protests were described using a range of

terms including "counterproductive," "non-productive," and "refreshing." Governmental actions aimed at increasing our national security served as a vital issue for participants, and commentary about this finding is raised as a critical issue. Finally, several students reflected on the recession occurring in Maine, and its effects on what is already the poorest region of the state. Even in cases where it might be "home," none of the students in the study had an intention of moving to rural, secluded portions of Maine following graduation.

The resignation participants demonstrated about these three situations as described was more pronounced among students who expressed liberal, rather than conservative, political views. Conversely, participants who described ideologies that are more conservative are more pleased with the results of the 2000 and 2002 national elections and the decision for U.S. incursion into Iraq. These students recognized the concerns about the national and state economic downturn, though the more conservative students demonstrated greater concern about this downturn because of its potential effects on the 2004 election, instead of the popular-felt consequences of the downturn.

Political Influences

In my opening story, I indicated political influences – such as political socialization, a strong sense of community, and privilege – played a role in the development of my political self. Participants indicated many of these same influences are a part of their political development, exempting them from the types of structural barriers to political participation that were described in the literature review. Relative to others in their hometown community, familial involvement coupled with familial wealth, status, or educational attainment resulted in active political socialization of student participants.

Participants attributed small town or identifiable sub-community as an important aspect of their lives, through which they describe individual senses of community. Such a

sense was frequently rooted in church attendance or hometown activities. The resulting personal connections were appreciated by the students and grounded the participants' political awareness. There is elucidation on the consistency between student comments and the second aspect of the New Commons (Parks Daloz, et al., 1996), complexity. Complexity was evident in Sharon's and Nate's contemplation of preferred career path, Bert's preparedness to leave his hometown despite his affinity for it, and students concerns about the state's economic outlook. Our international image, military deployment, and a reflection of social programs, feminism and women's safety, racism and affirmative action, religion, and privilege are also investigated. The rights and varied roles available to – and expected of – women was detailed, as was a perspective of relative affluence in community settings.

Each student identified a source of community and types of political action that are of interest. A Sense of Community is, thus, an explanation for the participation exhibited by the students in this study. It was clear the participants enjoyed privilege, but in few cases were they able to recognize more than some limited aspect of such privilege.

6. Students exhibited several of the influences cited in during the literature review: evidence of social location, social capital, political trust, and political socialization.

Student participants identified influences originating from their families and community, and spoke of their hometowns and/or churches as places they learned about community. This finding is congruent with established literature, literature that provides no one single answer, yet whose component parts allow for multiple, complementary explanations. Several participants identified their families and homelives and their schools and communities as sources of influence, the effects of which include their political ideology and levels of civic participation.

7. **Experiencing conventional or orthodox political experiences is not necessarily related to the anticipated future political participation of students in the study.**

Not surprisingly, political science students have participated in and described what I have called orthodox political experiences. These orthodox political experiences included the two participants who have worked for a U.S. Senator, two who have worked for state agencies, two who have lived overseas, and all who have voted. Many are the children of professionals who themselves exhibit civil responsibility, and for most participants, political socialization was rich and prevalent.

One of the more surprising discoveries I came to in this study was that none of the ten participants could fit within the "power-seeker" strata of Dahl's (1963) model. Recall that four of the five Domestic-Politically Oriented groups – Jack, Sarah, Robb, and Ryan – all questioned their suitability for the study. Ultimately, Amanda, Jack, and Sharon expect to use their degrees in their practice of the law, while Nathan and Sarah will pursue graduate work, using their political science training as foundational to further education. Dewey expects to apply his political knowledge to a military career, while Bert, Nate, Robb, and Ryan appreciated the liberal arts nature of – in contrast to the technical, political understanding suggested by – their degree. While each aspire to be a positive contributor in their respective communities, none right now anticipate a career in politics.

8. **The consumption of news is important in the lives of politically-aware students, although the volume of news consumed and the effort students use to gather their news varied.**

Students described the sense of comfort they feel from accessing the news, and many share a propensity to seek their news through the internet. Doing so increases the variety of sources available, and the ease of accessing news from several sources. A constant element of

conversations with participants was a discussion of news, news sources, and time and effort devoted to seeking information about current events and political commentary. From our conversations, it was clear that these students are aware of current events. Of course, reading news from the internet also decreases both the cost and commitment of subscribing to this bouquet of news sources, but I wonder whether consuming news from such sources results in a loss of the continuity or the gestalt of reading the same paper in its entirety with regularity.

9. Participants were sensitive to – or savvy to – ideological bias in news sources, and participants legitimized the use of spoof news programs as an information source.

Participating students spoke to their perception of bias in the news. In large part, participants selected news sources – at least partially completing their complement of news consumption – that speak to the ideology they profess. Alterman (2003) and Franken (2003) are among the latest authors asking whether ideological messages are carried in the media, whether those ideological messages are intended, and to what ends politicians utilize that bias to shore up a political clientele. Both these authors asserted that mainstream media are more apparently conservative than progressive, but other sources are available that argue the obverse. Importantly, here, participants' described their choices of news sources, the choice demonstrate awareness; the issues the participants learn of and the bias of those data are self-monitored, thus, the students' ideology contributes to the influences they seek.

I noted the use of late night comedy as a distributor of news and political and social commentary. Several students identified spoof news as a source of news and political commentary, too many to easily dismiss. This finding is reflected in the implications for future research.

Relevant Issues

The homogeneity in age, social location, and academic intent apparent in the participant group was reflected in the issues participants identified. With reflection on generational cohorts, defining "generational" is critical. Widespread responses affect similar-aged persons, thus, age is a compelling indicator of cohorts (see Andolina, 2002). Rather than assuming generation as a function of age, Mannheim (1952c) and Mayer (1992) asserted that generational cohorts are clustered about a significant event – or chain of events – occurs early in a citizen's political awareness. It is internalization of societal responses and the interpretation of political stimuli that serve as crucial elements in galvanizing a generational cohort.

The organizational scheme of Chapter Five reflects the relevant issues identified by students in the course of this research project. The noted issues included the expectations participants had of political leaders and of other citizens to be politically aware; identity of citizenship; beliefs about and the excitement associated with voting; and political party identification; the political influences of family and community, orthodox political experiences, and news and media; and the three "C's" noted from Common Fire (Parks Daloz, 1996). These "C's," the New Commons, Sense of Community, and Compassion, provide continuity for delineating Implications for Student Affairs Practice. The chapter ergo serves as a conclusion of sorts for the research study. The first of the two most compelling issues-oriented findings provides relief in the observation of participants' surprisingly cavalier responses to two significant, recent, and national events:

10. **while able to discuss dispassionately the events surrounding and the more obvious effects of 9/11 and Bush v. Gore, these events did not appear to resonate as significant events in participants' political maturation.**

The political influences cited by participants included their sense of community, each individually developed in their hometowns; their families and other persons that helped them to understand current events or politics; and their academic pursuits. There were few cases where a significant political event of national consequence was cited. Patriotic images were particularly powerful for participants who have studied abroad; familial influence was more powerful for students that expressed a greater interest in promoting civil rights; finally, orthodox political experiences were cited as important to students.

There was no apparent galvanizing event participants cited as crucial in their political development. The most common current event discussed by participants was the war in Iraq and the domestic effects of the war and 9/11. These events provide an opportunity for clarifying personal political development, as a backdrop for heaping praise or expressing frustration with national political leadership. The backdrop is but a convenience, however, for participants are using these events to illustrate their predisposed agreement or dissent to this leadership. Another very real issue drew relief to the political ideology; among their range of issues, no finding was as powerful for me as this:

11. students expressed apprehension about the methods of strengthening homeland security, provisions of the Patriot Act, and the assault on personal and civil rights.

Several statements from the participants were observed during the study, and were presented in the "Findings" chapters. Their statements suggest at the least concern over the propriety of governmental changes, and at the most fear of our government. Moreover, some comments legitimize an international belief that the United States is overreaching in our intervention of other countries.

Implications of Research

I introduced the "Statement of Problem" in Chapter One with an excerpt from former President Clinton's (2003) speech at the Kennedy Library in Boston. Later in the same speech, Mr. Clinton said,

> The world we are living in, even when you disagree with your government's policies, still contains enormous opportunities for people, especially for young people, to have an impact.

Participants demonstrated varying levels of political efficacy. Recall that Bert and Sharon have largely given up on the political system, Bert completely withdrawing from formal political participation, and Sharon choosing to pursue local social activism rather than political solutions. Nate expressed ambition to participate using local managerial means, focusing on public administration rather than politics. Jack, Ryan, and Sarah are eager to see more civil political action, challenging current policy and direction, while Nathan and Robb forecast the political demonstrations in response to the invasion of Iraq is a wasted effort. Dewey believed the demonstrations are effective in influencing policy, but concurrently believes the protests surrounding the contemplation of war against Iraq were destabilizing to U.S. policy and its integrity of military involvement. Importantly, most participants identified efficacy, identifying ways that they expect to have an impact on their communities. They foresaw their own political participation, anticipating that the rewards of their political participation are worth the effort.

Implications for Professional Practice

Attending college is assumed to be a time one learns citizenship skills (Dalton, 1985; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gutmann, 1995) and develops a sense of civic engagement (Cone, Cooper, & Hollander, 2001; Henning, 1998). Through this research, the meaning that student

participants have attached to civil political behavior was explored. Student affairs professionals teach community, inclusion, and awareness of privilege, and therefore have an opportunity to participate in citizenship development. Through those lessons, student affairs practitioners help hone students' political awareness, influence, and interpretation of issues.

Political Awareness

Political socialization is an important element of education, and fostering the necessary skills for participating in government has long been, and remains, one of our values as student affairs practitioners (Clothier, 1931; Hamrick, 1998; Moore & Hamilton, 1993; Morse, 1989; Rickard, 1993; Young, 1993). Because student services professionals have the obligation to participate with students as they develop life skills, understanding democratic-republican forms of government and the activities or elements of an educational environment that support that political awareness is important. The important elements of Political Awareness in the Findings were students' expectations of other citizens, political leaders, and opinions about political parties.

Students can rightly expect college officials to have cursory understanding of many disciplines. Study participants expected other citizens to be responsible for comprehending knowledge about political systems and current issues, and for developing a sense of patriotism. As I suggested in the opening chapter, I have worried about my personal political participation because of my position, not wanting to use my position to unduly influence students in my environment with my political views. I am now reconsidering that, for in wanting to refrain from influencing students' ideology, I wonder if I've appeared uncommitted or undecided about issues or candidates. If students expect political participation, we are well served as practitioners to be visibly invested in democratic participation.

For student affairs professionals, approaches in citizenship education frequently come in terms of developing community (Dungy, 2001; Roberts, 1993). Our programs frequently replicate scaled models of self-governed communities (Carter, 1989). Roberts attributed the Student Personnel Point of View (American Council on Education, 1937) as the beginning of "community" as a tool of our profession. From community, we have adopted harmonizing values such as multiculturalism, community, equality, freedom, human dignity, justice, free speech, political correctness, and truth (Rickard, 1993; Young, 1993).

The element of complexity was evident in the "vote or shut up" suggestion advanced by several participants. As social change agents, we have a responsibility to educate students on social injustice and privilege, and its effects on some citizens' ability to participate in many expectations of society, including government.

Student affairs practitioners should understand the devolving role that social organizations, including political parties, have. The decrease in social capital that effects civic participation in social and labor organization also has ushered in a decreased loyalty to party politics. Understanding that orthodox political experiences can come from cross-party experiences and that several students will operate politically as independent, as party agendas are viewed as being internally inconsistent, shows a shrew understanding of the state of political participation in the United States.

Political efficacy is diminished among more progressive students. The popularity and the support in congress for the current administration has provided little evidence that democratic government can reflect the views of liberal-minded citizens. Student affairs professional can recognize that our statements against current government policies, initiatives, or priorities, while well-placed as active citizens, should also underscore strong senses of political efficacy, if only in the long run.

Political Influences

Participants identified family and hometown community as their primary political influences, but student affairs literature and research affirms the influence of the collegiate environment (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Being knowledgeable about the political environment of the campus is an important role for student affairs professionals.

At least four types of orthodox political experiences are important to citizenship development. Fostering the presence of these experiences is an appropriate role of student affairs professionals, as orthodox political experiences can aid in developing an appreciation for democratic structures, policy formation, or the international status of the United States. The first of these, interning for elected officials or volunteering for campaigning candidates, can be a tremendous opportunity for a student who has, likely, already developed a strong sense of political identity. The second, student government experiences, was underrepresented in this study but is a typical and valuable source of governance. The scale of governance can take many forms, but continued attention and effort to these governing bodies, as well as reasonable institutional response to students' requests and concerns, is appropriate. Practitioners should be aware of the influence these experiences can have.

Another political experience that practitioners should support is service learning. Service learning has long been a part of the American college and university landscape (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Flikkema, 1998). Learning outcomes attributed to service learning include gains in interpersonal, intrapersonal, and practical competencies (Whitt & Miller, 1999). It was a motivating force for some participants in this study.

The fourth type of orthodox political experiences is a time-tested student activity: the expression, as a group, of approval or disapproval to political events (e.g., Altbach & Cohen, 1989, 1990; Boren, 2001; Gitlin, 1987; Klatch, 1999; Miser, 1988; Rhoads, 1997a, 1998a).

Recognizing both that participants related indifference to political party identification and Putnam's (1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000) conclusion that civil participation in social and political organizations is on the decline provides a particular challenge to student affairs professionals. Supporting demonstrations and inspiring students to find public means of political expression helps the students who participate in their respective development, and simultaneously provides a more enriching and educating campus environment for all students..

Participants had a plethora of comments about their consumption of the news. As educators, we should work to understand how our students consume news. Media bias, differences in scope and attention of news sources, and the convenience of the news sources students value is are important campus environmental issues student development specialists to understand. Participants opined, "it takes work" to stay informed, but participants also expressed a satisfaction that comes from that effort.

Relevant Issues

Understanding issues that are important to students is an important, and timeless, role for those who work with students. For participants in this study, pertinent issues were portrayed according to the framework of the New Commons, Sense of Community, and Compassion. The characteristics of students on the campus where this research was conducted are congruent with, for instance, the issues of growing up in a small town or the effect of enjoying privilege in communities suffering from economic downturn. Addressing issues of women's leadership and safety, personal and parental attitudes about feminism, religion, privilege, racism, and affirmative action may be prevalent at many college campuses. While cited in this campus-specific study, student and citizen concerns about homeland security initiatives, and in particular the U.S.A. Patriot Act, were not isolated to the campus of research.

Pre-war protests were a global phenomenon, effecting many college and university campuses (Mangan, 2003; Tyrangiel, 2003; Young, 2003).

The nature of qualitative work is that the context and applicability of this work is to be determined by the reader, rather than the researcher. This characteristic is among the rationale of appropriateness – the direct applicability – of qualitative research within student affairs work and in educational settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Jones, et al., 2002; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2002). It is anticipated that student development practitioners are already involved in the exploration and determination of the issues that are relevant to students at their own campuses; applying personal and campus-specific knowledge to one's local practice is an important aspect of student affairs work.

Implications for Future Research

Among the purposes of this research is the possibility it may aid in theory development for others exploring the phenomenon of political interest development. Questions or perceptions in one research project can provide insight into projects that follow. In general, this research has drawn attention to

1. the propensity researchers to assume voting is a singular, inviolable act of civic participation. Researchers should be encouraged to refrain from excluding other forms of activism when exploring the phenomenon of political participation.

This propensity is only one of the two serious concerns of the state of political science's attempt to understand civic participation. The second is the lack of multi-faceted reasons for political activity. There is a wealth of models that alone provide an understanding of a segment of population. Exploring the confluence of these otherwise distinct explanations is an appropriate path of study and of the field.

Several questions arose during the course of this research that can serve as touchpoints for future research. Some of this research is better approached through future constructivist research, while others would be well served through more positivist methodologies. Research proposals that could be studied through positivist means include:

2. assessing the consumption of comedy spoof news programs as an information source. This should include late-night television, such as The Daily Show, and print media, such as The Onion.
3. forming an understanding of the volume, variety, and impact of news sources utilized by students. Evaluating programs such as the Collegiate Readership Program would be congruent with this recommendation.
4. assessing students' assumptions of news and its ideological bias.
5. testing the notion arising from this research, that the themes of Political Awareness, Political Influences, and Relevant Issues address the political development of college students.

Other research topics would be better understood through inductive methodologies, such as those qualitative research provides. Suggested topics include contributing to an understanding of:

6. how national "patriotism" might be understood differently according to a person's race or background.
7. students' popular beliefs about political party identification, relevance, or function.
8. how orthodox political experiences enhance, undermine, or have no relationship with loyal party politics.
9. current student perceptions of the efficacy of political demonstrations.

Summary

This chapter highlights eleven findings, presented with respect to three themes important to understanding political participation. In acknowledging their political awareness, the participants expect democratic participation of their fellow citizens. It is through common participation that democracy is maintained. Importantly, some participants described themselves as being independent of political party affiliation, while some who have an affiliation reject a loyal adherence to party agendas. Finally, the participants questioned the effectiveness of protest and some questioned the responsiveness of their government to their beliefs.

Several key influences have shaped the participants' Political Awareness. Some of these influences are related to their home lives, childhoods, neighborhoods, schools, or orthodox political experiences. Influences such as social location and political socialization are important in the civil development of participants. The consumption of news is an important influence and is therefore described. Finally, two findings about Relevant Issues the students described are delineated. These two issues suggest both relaxed and elevated attention to current events, underscoring complexity (Parks Daloz, et al., 1996) and significance to the participants' understandings of their government.

Student development professionals will benefit from this research by reflecting on and contrasting the perspectives and experiences here with those of students on their own campuses. Ten students who are studying the political system and political participation of citizens contributed to this research. The student participants expressed, and this study documents, a reflection of the political influences they have known, statements of their personal levels of awareness, and interpretations of current issues they described as important. Among influences noted by students are those experiences that institutions frequently offer to

its students, both orthodox experiences (such as internships) and non-electoral political participation (including seemingly non-political events such as service learning). Such experiences contribute to the democratic education to college students.

The key assumption of democracy is that government is an institution "of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Lincoln, 1863). As practitioners of democracy, the participants reflected they are developing skills to balance state interests and civil rights, considering the obligations of the whole and the individual. Through their voices and their participation, through the presentation of the meanings they have attributed to their own political involvement, the participants in this study have been democratic.

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Appendix 1

Definitions Related to Political Awareness Development

Political Participation

Political participation is reported to be in decline. While countered by some, political science literature disproportionately identifies "participation" through limited, electoral political behaviors. Certainly, there is an ease that results in observing the singular didactic action of one does or does not vote. For purposes of this study, participants define political participation; it might include orthodox political experiences, voting, or actions that are not apparently political. Contributions through community service or paying attention to current events are political if the participant describes it as such.

Social Location

Refers to characteristics such as social class, educational obtainment, occupation, age, race, and gender. Political knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed in the United States (Conway, 2000; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Social characteristics determine political preferences (Campbell, 1979; Lazersfeld, Berelson, & Gandet, 1968; Tiexeira, 1992). Socioeconomic status and level of education consistently correlate with political participation; wealth provides time, opportunity, and more frequent exposure to political stimulation.

Political Efficacy

A personal sense or feeling that one's political participation can have an impact upon the political process, that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bring about this change (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954).

Social Capital

Two broad types of definitions represent "social capital." The first type of definition "focuses primarily on social capital as a resource facilitation action by a focal actor....[the second] as a feature of the internal linkages that characterizes the structures of collective actors" (Adler & Kwon, 2000, pp. 90, 92).

The second definition is the one that received greater consideration in the formation of this project. Putnam (1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000) focuses on the impact one makes in their macro society. It highly approximates the type of community-come-involvement promoted by student development practitioners; both express a reliance on shared objectives and norms, trust and reciprocity, and dispersed self-governance. A major component of social capital is the generalized reciprocity (ibid; also see Singer, 2002) in which members of a social network contribute and can anticipate that aid will be reciprocated.

Political Socialization

The process (Hess & Torney, 1968; Lipset, 1995; Roberts & Edwards, 1991; Sigal, 1965) by which "junior members" (Hess & Torney, 1968) learn the political norms, values, and behavior patterns of the nations, groups, or subgroups (Lipset, 1995). These political norms and behaviors are "transmitted from generation to generation" (Sigal, 1965, p. 1; also

see Roberts & Edwards, 1991). Family, schools, and local institutions are contributors, or agents (Davies, 1977; Renshon, 1977) to political socialization.

Political socialization also applies to the scholarship by which this phenomenon is studied (Campbell, 1979; Hyman, 1959/1969; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001).

Political Culture

Describes the effect that political and cultural influences – the interpretations of political awareness and influence of a society or subsociety – have upon a population, effecting macro-societal attitudes towards political institutions (Sills, 1991/1968). It is different than political socialization for reasons of scale. Just as psychology addresses an individual while sociology addresses culture, political socialization effects individuals while political culture influences political culture. Political culture is evidenced as the collective awareness shared within one's macro society (Conway, 2000).

Political Trust

An outgrowth of social capital and political efficacy, two general points about trust seem to pervade the literature (Barber, 1983; Hart, 1978; Hetherington, 1998). One line holds trust as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, while others view political trust a result of a match between expectations about political actors and institutions and their actual performance.

Theoretical considerations of political trust suggest that people have normative expectations about a range of policy outcomes (Easton, 1965; Stokes, 1962; Wright, 1976), the competency and morality of political actors (Barber, 1983; Hart, 1978; Wright, 1976), and about the operation of the political process (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 1995). Trust will be

higher or lower depending on the degree of correspondence between citizen expectations and perceived government performance (Craig, 1993).

Generational Cohorts

Mannheim (1952c) argued that people in the same age group and sharing a common background witness an event, and are likely to experience that event in a way that will bond the generation. Age is a compelling indicator of cohorts (see Andolina, 2002) but, importantly, cohorts are not perfectly generational, but rather based upon commonality of experience. Mannheim (1952c) and Mayer (1992) insist that it a significant event – or chain of events – occurring early in a citizen's political awareness, thus binding a "cohort." Klatch (1999) suggests the interesting caveat that a bound cohort can still inter different interpretations of similar stimuli. Thus, despite sharing paradigmatic approaches – distinguishing the cohort – consideration of relevant issues still result in ideological differences within the cohort.

Rational Choice

Social action can be seen as rationally motivated. The language and models used to describe economic markets are applied to describe personal, commercial, and political decision-making (Downs, 1957; Miller, 1999; Mitchell, 1969; Ostrom, 1998; Page & Shapiro, 1992; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Weale, 1983); citizens, through complex computations that are wittingly or unwittingly made, determine their political preferences.