

THEORIES FROM THE STREETS: UNDERSTANDING CANVASSING'S IMPACT
ON POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF CANVASSERS

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ABSTRACT

THEORIES FROM THE STREETS: UNDERSTANDING CANVASSING'S IMPACT ON POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF CANVASSERS

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This mixed-methods research explores how the experience of canvassing impacts a canvassers political, social, and civic engagement. It gives a discussion of motivations for canvassing, canvass office experiences, reasons for retention and termination, and predictions for former canvassers levels of engagement. Methods used include a national web-based survey, an ethnography and an autoethnography. The sample includes both canvassers who are currently employed and canvass staff who have quit. My findings suggest that canvassers are likely to predict engagement beyond the canvass in political, social, or civic work. Furthermore, findings also indicate that there is a positive relationship between time canvassed and level of engagement. As the duration of canvass employment increased, so did a level of predicted engagement. While female canvass staff were more likely to burnout in a canvass environment, this study suggests gender did not play a role in predicting future engagement. Limitations of this research include a small sample size, and there is a need for further research to examine if the relationships in this study are conclusive.

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INTRODUCTION

Upon finishing my last semester of graduate coursework in 2013, and the end of my Teaching Assistantship, I began looking for a job. I was looking for part time work in my hometown of Sacramento. It was my hope that a part time job would afford me the opportunity to put the finishing touches on my graduate thesis. Attracted by an advertisement on Craigslist, I applied online to work for a grassroots campaign office. Within a few moments of the submission of my application, a young woman named Candace reached out to me by telephone. After a short conversation, Candace suggested that I apply to an Assistant Director position with the company. I agreed to an interview and within a month I was hired and asked to move out of the state.

I stepped into my first canvass office in June of 2013. I had just driven through the night from Humboldt County, CA to Portland, OR. I was wearing a blazer, black slacks, and flats. I knew I had over-dressed within moments of meeting my boss' boss, who was wearing shorts and a baseball cap. The canvass office occupied the second floor of a warehouse full of studio space. The stairwell was dark and as I walked up it, I could smell the incense the yoga studio below was burning.

When I arrived at the top of the stairs, I could see that the walls were covered in an array of brightly colored paper crafts. Directly in front of me was a life size bar graph designating fundraising goals. Behind me, a 3-Dimensional tree emerging from the wall grew an extended network of roots and construction paper handprints. Hanging from its branches were construction paper leaves in varying shades of green, flowers of all

varieties, and carefully crafted cookie and water bottle-shaped paper crafts. I later learned that the leaves and flowers reflected fundraising goals and the other objects were gifts from donors in the field. The room was sparsely furnished with only but a handful of folding chairs stacked neatly in the back corner. I could hear murmuring in the backroom of two folks.

Casey, the Canvass Director, emerged from the back office, upon hearing me arrive. Casey greeted me and asked if I would like to join them for a cup of coffee at a nearby coffee shop. We discussed my motivations to canvass and what role I was looking to play in the office over the course of the summer. I learned that Casey's team was advocating for the environment, women's reproductive rights, and LGBTQ rights. I recall being excited to be part of the movement that Casey and their team was building. Casey sent me home early that day, as they knew that I needed to get settled in my new city.

The next day I arrived for my first-ever canvass shift. From the stairwell, I could hear Daft Punk's latest hit pumping from the speakers. I began to listen to the murmuring of what sounded like hundreds of energetic voices. This time, when I got up the stairs, the room was full of mostly young twenty-something year olds I learned most of them had just finalized their own academic coursework at various collegiate institutions and were here for the campaign office's summer jobs. Their varying degrees of preparation and excitement for the day were fairly evident to me, the newcomer. A small group of folks were hastily building clipboards while taking just enough care to ensure their campaign fact sheets were in the correct order. Two canvassers were counting out contributions forms in the corner. "Four monthlies, and 8 one-times!" I heard one of them exclaim. One

young lady was frantically copying from a training binder onto the whiteboard. A handful of folks were sitting up against a wall, nervously reciting lines. The office's atmosphere was contagious. "Circle up!" exclaimed Casey.

We assembled in our daily circle. In this space, we had announcements and introductions. Casey also reported on our office's fundraising goals for the season and our progress towards them. Casey then announced that we would be breaking off into training groups. After circle, Lizzie, who looked like she couldn't be more than 19 years old, pulled me aside saying, "you're with me." I later learned it was her third day on the campaign. She gave me a basic rundown of what to expect on my first day and taught me the campaign message about the local river we were working to protect. I stuttered over my lines, but Lizzie was able to offer me gentle guidance and encouragement despite my obvious nervousness. All too quickly, training time was over and we were back to our circle formation for the calling of crews. "Who's got a crew?" yelled Lizzie. Casey energetically jumped and exclaimed, "I've got a crew! It's Alex [my chosen name], Tracy, and me. We're going to the Waterfront!" I smiled awkwardly, unprepared for this display of exuberant energy. After crew calls, announcements concluded with a final cheer and we canvassers quickly disbanded from the office.

I recall being timid at first when attempting to hail folks into conversation. My soft-spoken attempt to get people to talk to me was not very confident. I remember one of my first conversations was with a gentleman in his 50's. He was wearing a business suit, had dark brown hair, and sort of a gruff-looking face. He told me, upon hearing my jumbled attempt at delivering the campaign message that he would contribute \$50 a

month to the cause (a significant contribution) if I could tell him where the river I was advocating for was. I said I had no idea where the river was and that it was my first day. I explained that I felt unprepared and unequipped to demonstrate my personal knowledge of the campaign to him. He scoffed at me and told me that the very river I was advocating for was just underneath the dock I was standing on. While he did not make a financial contribution towards the fundraising campaign with me that day, my interaction with him spoke volumes about how unprepared I was feeling in my first moments as a canvasser.

In the months to follow however, my excitement began to build. Many new folks from all across the country continued to join our campaign. Lizzie and I became good friends, canvassing often together. I learned how to support Lizzie and canvassers like her in their development. I learned how to train newcomers on the basics of canvassing and lead out crews of my own. Within a couple of weeks, I had my very own realm - staff development - conducting individual meetings with the canvassers to aid them in creating their own summer fundraising goals. The experience was so life-altering that I decided to abandon my thesis work and my graduate career to remain a part of the movement post-summer.

Following my brief departure from academia, I canvassed for three years. I very much believed that the work I was doing was an extension of my activism. Furthermore, canvassing quickly became a part of my identity and as a consequence, I attempted to go to the moon and back to make my campaign successful. I could often be found hanging recruitment posters at brunch venues on my day off, planning competitions to excite my canvassers about the movement, or handing out recruitment flyers on my way to a local

coffee shop. The honeymoon phase of my canvassing experiences though, was quick to dissipate. Despite my extreme dedication to my canvass organization and the broader movement, my ability to grow my team and produce a high-dollar raising canvass was limited by my canvassers' productivity, snowy winters, extreme interoffice competition, and my own capabilities. My supervisors were supportive of my process, but ultimately it became apparent to me the lofty fundraising and canvass recruitment goals weren't attainable to me. Dedication, commitment, enthusiasm, or even personal fundraising do not measure a Canvass Director's success in a campaign office. Measurements of success, rather, include dollars raised and the number of recruited canvassers. And, although I was definitely capable of fundraising myself - bringing in a career average of nearly \$200 a shift, and frequently making "Top Director Average" charts - my offices tended to average right at the mark of or below quota. Furthermore, although I was able to recruit many like-minded folks to join my team, I had a hard time getting them to stick with the campaign beyond their first couple of days. Given this, my offices were not sufficient enough to be deemed "successful." I became disheartened by my lack of success. In August 2015, I decided it was best for me to find other opportunities.

My activist spirit, however, still lives strong within me. I attend marches, rallies, protests, and other demonstrations on behalf of causes I care about. I contribute financial assistance to groups, candidates, and issues that speak to my heart. I educate myself by seeking education from others. I am currently registered to vote and voted in the primaries this election season (for that, I attribute to my experiences canvassing). Believe it or not, I would even canvass again. These experiences led me to wonder how my own

experiences compared to the experiences of other canvassers and became the central focus of this study.

Research Question and Rationale

This research seeks to understand how canvass experiences inform political, social, and civic engagement. I am interested in discovering whether or not my experiences mirror other folks who have spent some time canvassing. In particular, I am interested in the following research questions:

1. What motivates canvassers to take on positions in canvass offices?
2. Why do they stay with their canvass offices?
3. Why do canvass organizations experience such high turnover?
4. How do their experiences in the canvass office impact their engagement beyond its walls down the road?

It is through these questions that we can better understand how canvassing impacts our canvassers and, more broadly, social movements of today. In the following section, I will provide a framework for the research that I have conducted.

A Framework for this Thesis

This chapter serves as an introduction to my experiences canvassing and my rationale for the research I am conducting. It presents my research questions and my motivations for pursuing this topic of interest. Following, I will introduce canvassing and the various modes utilized throughout the country. I will focus heavily on the modes my survey respondents participate in, including door and street outreach. I will follow this with a discussion of a canvasser's typical day both in office and in the field, drawing on

my own experiences as a canvasser. I will conclude this section with a brief introduction of the most prominent canvass organizations today.

From the introduction, I will transition into a review of current literature. This literature will provide the framework for which I have both analyzed and discussed my data. In this chapter I will draw on research offerings pertaining to social movement theory and canvassing. I will focus heavily on Dana Fischer's (2006) Activism, Inc. because of its significant parallels to this research. I will also provide other relevant literature on the impacts of canvassing on canvassers.

I highlight my own experience - "theories from my streets" - in the third chapter. I will weave Dana Fischer's research findings through my own reflections on my experiences as a canvasser. I will also bring to discussion the dual positions I occupy as both a researcher and canvasser. In conclusion, I'll offer an exploration of the ethical concerns and limitations of this research study.

In the fourth chapter, I will present my data from my national survey on canvassers' lived experiences. Following the presentation of the data, I will provide a brief discussion of my findings. These will also be weaved together with Fischer's findings.

I will conclude this thesis with reflections on this study. I will include implications this research might have and discussion of remaining questions for possible further research.

A Brief History of Canvassing in the United States

Fundraising canvassing, at its core, is a method that attempts to identify and mobilize supporters on a large scale towards making financial contributions toward social change (Card 2008). The technique of canvassing is most successfully used by well-known nonprofits or organizations working on behalf of issues the public is likely to be familiar with (Klein 2016). Today, canvassing happens in a variety of ways including telephone calls, mailings, and field outreach. Most groups utilize some combination of these methods, though field outreach is strongly preferred (Stoutenborough 2009). This is because field outreach has proven to generate more new and unique supporters than the alternative methods (Stoutenborough 2009). For the sake of this research, I will explore canvassing only as it pertains to field outreach and hereafter I will refer to this action as canvassing.

Generally speaking, canvassing involves a team of people going door-to-door or occupying street corners requesting some action from the general public (Klein 2016). While both forms of outreach have their own benefits, street outreach is a more common technique employed by fundraising canvass organizations of today (Stoutenborough 2014). He suggests that this is due to street canvassing's ability to reach a younger demographic of people, which provides one pull for canvass organizations (Stoutenborough 2014).

Canvassing is often an outsourced labor, that is, groups that run canvasses are hired by nonprofits or other organizations to employ canvass staff who are willing to do the labor-intensive leg work (Klein 2016). Canvassing was originally developed as a tool

to increase voter registration (Fischer 2009). Today, it is often used to achieve new donor acquisition and retention of previous donors (Klein 2016). Canvassing did not move towards a tool for advancing political agendas and social movements until the early 1970's (Fischer 2009).

Canvassing did not reach the popularity it has today in the United States until 1996. Its continued growth in popularity can be partially attributed to the works of Gerber and Green (1999, 2001, and 2002). Gerber and Green's (1999, 2001, and 2002) research launched several controlled experiments that found canvassing was one of the most effective means of increasing voter turnout.

Enabled by developments in social and behavioral research, canvassing began to include messaging that specifically targeted an individual's self-interest around the year 2000 (Beck and Heidmann 2014). This new form of canvassing allowed canvass organizations to focus their mobilization efforts on their supporters (Beck and Heidmann 2014). Research on canvassing suggests that this type of mobilization is more efficient means of persuading voters (Benedict 2016 and Beck and Heidmann 2014). Today, canvassing has become a mainstream tactic that advocacy and charitable groups use (Fischer 2009).

In the following section, I will explore models of canvass organizations of today. I will begin with a discussion of the infrastructure of today's canvass organizations. I will follow with a discussion of benefits canvass organizations have for charitable groups. I will conclude with a walk through a typical workday in the life of canvasser.

Canvass Organizations of Today

While canvass organizations have subtle differences, the infrastructures amongst them are similar. Though canvassing occurs year-round, most canvass organizations beef up in the summer months when college-aged folks are out of school.

While most canvass organizations are themselves for-profit, they share a commitment to creating political change by engaging everyday people in face-to-face interactions. Their for-profit status means that advocacy, charitable groups, and candidates that hire them incur an immediate loss by employing canvassers. The generation of and long-term giving behaviors of new donors often offset this loss for these groups and candidates. Through membership donor base building, canvass organizations become invaluable resources for these groups by generating both new and sustained memberships. Progressive groups not only benefit from an increase in membership building, they also benefit from the increase in name recognition and the awareness around the issues for which they advocate.

With few exceptions, most canvass organizations are similar in both the models they use for canvassing and their overall structure of the canvasser's workday. I will first describe the structure of a canvasser's workday and will follow that discussion with a description of the canvass model. Because this research is aimed at understanding the canvasser and director experience, I will not be describing the day of someone in their observation and training periods.

Before the canvass day begins, there is quite a significant amount of back of house work to get done. For example, canvassers must be divided up into groups,

called crews or teams, and sent to their respective neighborhoods or locations, commonly referred to as turf. The process of cutting crews is different for street and door canvasses. In a street canvass, canvassers are assigned a location (often commercial) to canvass with medium to heavy foot traffic. In a door canvass, canvassers are assigned to neighborhoods (always residential) to knock on doors. Door canvassing requires significantly more preparation including mapping routes and navigating communal breaks or check-ins with fellow canvass staff.

When a canvasser first arrives to a canvass office, the expectation is that they jump into their role. Their roles can range from preparing announcements to orienting and training new recruits. Roles in the office are used to retain staff by growing their investment in the office. Additionally, roles in the office will vary greatly from one canvasser to the next depending on the plan for their development. Often times, folks who are training new recruits (often referred to as trainers) will come in up to 30 minutes prior to the rest of the team. The trainers are often comprised of the leadership team in that office, ranging from crew managers to directors. Upon the arrival of the rest of the team, announcements will begin. Announcements provide a space for introductions, reporting on fundraising progress, and celebrations of the previous days' successes, orienting crews of canvassers to their sites, and pumping up the team. Training will generally occur immediately following the announcements. Trainings will consist of time to practice the campaign message and learning specific skills that will enable a better execution. When training ends, the canvass team will launch with a cheer out and disband into the field.

Once crews arrive in the field, they will begin their canvassing. A canvass shift, generally, lasts about 5 hours and includes a 30-minute break and two 15-minute breaks. During the 5 hours of their canvass shift, canvassers are expected to hail folks into conversation, deliver a compelling campaign story, and close membership deals. Different canvassing organizations and their clients have different expectations for what qualifies as a membership. Most canvass organizations are hoping to acquire continued membership in the form of monthly donors, but still allow their fundraisers to accept one-time contributions. Throughout the day the canvasser who has been designated the role of crew manager is responsible for managing the crew, and checking in with them to drive membership priorities. When the canvass day has ended, canvassers will return to the office for cash out.

Back at the office, canvassers compile all their contributions. The crew manager is responsible for collecting and reporting the canvassing funds from their crew. The canvassers will briefly meet with the director at the end of the day to discuss their results and debrief their day. Canvassers will then clock out and directors will stay back to compile nightly reports.

Outside of that basic structure of the day, canvass organizations do invite canvassers in for additional training. This applies in particular if those canvassers are responsible for managing crews. Canvassers will often also gather outside of work for company-sponsored social gatherings.

The Director role varies across different canvass organizations. Some canvass organizations require a significant workload, including working upwards of 80-hour

workweeks. Still some have more manageable workweeks. The responsibilities canvass directors hold vary considerably between canvass organizations. For that reason, generalizations about all aspects of director shifts across all canvass organizations cannot be made. However, most canvass director positions require some element of recruitment and hiring: advertising their positions, screening applicants, interviewing, and making hiring decisions. They also always require some form of management of canvass staff: setting goals for them consistent with office goals, holding canvassers accountable to standards and expectations, and providing canvassers with mentorship and training. Generally, canvass directors also are responsible for the entire back end reporting - compiling a nightly deposit, reporting fundraising data, and managing their offices' budgets and payroll. On top of this workload, if canvass directors have a canvass requirement (which, again, most do), they must carve out time in their week to stay on top of this requirement. In this way, the canvass director position, comes with a significant responsibility.

Now that I have created some general understanding of the positions of both canvasser and canvass directors, I will explore each of the canvass organizations independently.

Current Field Organizations

In this section, I will give a brief history of each of the prominent canvass organizations whose canvassers participated in my research study. I have assigned canvass organizations pseudonyms to cloak their identities. In the overviews I have

provided, I will include information about these canvass organizations drawing on both my own personal experience and information commonly available via the web.

Advocates for Action

Launching canvassers out of its doors all across the country since the 1980's, Advocates for Action is one of the oldest modern models of canvass organizations we see today. They, like many other canvass organizations, are hired by progressive nonprofit groups to run fundraising campaigns on their behalf. The infrastructure and "know-how" of groups like Advocates for Action have allowed nonprofits to build and grow their membership donor bases. With numerous current and former clients, Advocates for Action can be found campaigning on behalf of both issue-based campaigns and advocacy work.

Speak Out

In the early 2000's, Speak Out was founded with the goal of expanding the progressive movement through contact with everyday people. It was their ambition that this contact would expand the donor base of progressive candidates and causes through small donor fundraising. The following year, Speak Out broadened their work to include working to identify democratic voters in partnerships with other organizations. Today, they continue to advocate for both progressive candidates and running issue-based campaigns on behalf of nonprofits while working to expand the democratic voter base.

Cooperating Cultures

Also established in the early 2000's, Cooperating Cultures works on a global scale through its different branches to launch the progressive movement forward. Their

canvassing model, only differing slightly from the aforementioned canvassing groups, gives canvassers the liberty of creating their own campaign message. Cooperating Cultures focuses their membership building on advocacy work on behalf of humanitarian efforts, though they have (and will likely in the future) run issue-based campaigns.

Act Now

Act Now is an independent nonprofit organization that houses its own face-to-face outreach. This lack of outsourcing sets it apart from other mediums of canvassing. They too, however, seek to build up the membership donor base in efforts of providing the resources necessary to maintain their mission. Act Now also campaigns on a global scale and have been doing so since before the 1980's. They are entirely reliant on individual supporters and grants, which means that canvassing is an integral part to their organizations survivorship. Like the other canvass organizations, they rely on canvassing to also build their own name recognition, encourage action of the ordinary folk, and to expand the progressive movement as it pertains to their particular focus, which is issue-based campaigning.

People Power

People Power is a relatively new canvass operation, having launched their first campaign only in the last couple of years. In addition to fundraising for charitable groups, People Power also provides on-site training for organizations that wish to spark up their own fundraising organizations. The meat of their work is to build membership for small nonprofits of varying kinds.

There are far more canvass organizations than are listed here, but these are the most prominent canvass organizations that exist today.

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“We need more radical people,” said Saul Alinsky in Rules for Radicals (1989). We need more people who care deeply for others (Alinsky 1989). Alinsky’s words, referring to a need for concern surrounding the mistreatment of others, lays the framework for a call to action. In a world marked by rampant injustice, it is no surprise these words twenty-five years later line campaign walls and inspire canvassers across the nation.

In the following section, I will lay the framework for this research on today’s “radical people.” I will begin with a brief discussion of some current social issues, which I called the “contexts of canvassing.” My discussion of social issues will remain focused on both the issues I have canvassed for and the issues the canvasser respondents in this study have canvassed for. I will follow with relevant social movement theory to provide a framework for analysis. I will delve into a discussion of literature that explores canvasser’s lived experiences and how those experiences have impacted their post-canvass engagement. For the latter, I will draw heavily on the work of Dana Fischer (2006).

The Contexts of Canvassing

In this section, I will give a brief discussion of the challenges we face today. I will begin with reviewing the atrocious crimes committed by our police force used against our black brothers and sisters. I will discuss the war on women’s health through the denial of our reproductive freedoms. I will shed light on the discrimination of lesbian, gay,

bisexual, trans, and frankly anyone who identifies as queer or different people of all variations, despite recent victories in the realm of LGBTQ legislation. I will speak to the need for humanitarian efforts both in the United States and Beyond. A discussion of environmental concerns will conclude this section.

In my spiritual community, a large banner hangs prominently in the front of our gathering. Reading “Black Lives Matter,” this banner speaks to the recent unjust slayings of unarmed black men through police violence. “I can’t breathe,” were the final words of Eric Garner, who lost his life in a New York Police Department officer’s chokehold. Both Eric Harris and Walter Scott were killed by badge-wearing individuals in their respective home states of Oklahoma and South Carolina (Parker 2015). Police shot and killed a 12-year-old, Tamir Rice, a black child in a park. Sadly, there are numerous more disgusting displays of unnecessary physical police force used against black folks (Parker 2015). This slaying of people of color is unjust and disgusting.

Injustice for our people of color extends into our communities, too. Children of color are incarcerated, tried as adults, and given absurdly harsh sentences, far more than their white peers for similar crimes. Children of color also find inequality in their education due to lack of access primarily due to wealth disparities and housing segregation (Irving 2016). Adult folk of color find themselves victims of underemployment at significantly high rates (Irving 2016). All people of color, regardless of age, face some form of discrimination. Racial profiling is rampant throughout many of our communities. This systematic racism is outdated in its ideology and, regardless of its timing, remains hateful.

We are also waging a war on women and their reproductive rights here in the United States. We have seen an increase in “personhood laws,” which are laws that attribute rights to fertilized eggs. These laws make it difficult for women who need urgent medical care due to a life-threatening pregnancy or miscarriage. They also have the potential to make it harder for women to gain access to birth control services. Furthermore, in some states, access to women’s healthcare clinics have been restricted. These clinics provide low-income women with not only birth control, but also reproductive health care. As a woman who was treated for cervical dysplasia and whose reproductive health care was once dependent upon clinics like these, I know how important they are - they prevented me from developing cancer. Where there are challenges to in-clinic care, there are also challenges to contraceptive care. In recent history, our Supreme Court struck down the rights of women by granting corporations the ability to deny contraceptive coverage, and the Court is continuing to have on-going conversations about the many challenges to the Affordable Care Act’s requirement that health insurance continues to provide coverage without copay (Amiri 2015). These attacks on women and their health care need to be challenged. Without this access, women are at risk, and we need to continue the fight to ensure all women everywhere have access to reproductive health care.

Despite the recent nation-wide victory that granted same-sex couples the ability to marry, the LGBTQ community continues to face challenges. In June 2008, I gave consent to a local reporter to post an image of my then wife and I hugging during a marriage equality demonstration. Some months later, the image made it back to upper

echelons at a camp I was employed with, and I was informed that I would not be afforded the opportunity to return next summer. In twenty-eight states, LGBTQ folks like me lack protection from termination due to their sexual orientation (Esseks 2015). Clearly, there is still significant work to do.

Humanitarian action, at its core, provides the ability to aide neglected people including refugees and survivors of both crisis and natural disaster. Natural disasters have the ability to, within minutes, destroy entire populations leaving folks without the ability to access clean water, healthcare, or transportation. Humanitarian groups, while advocating for folks in places of natural disaster, also advocate for the neglected. Nearly 60 million are currently fleeing conflict around the world. Isolated from safety, these people become displaced and in need of psychological and physical care (MSF 2015).

The devastating impacts of anthropogenic environmental degradation are ever-present, too. Humans and wildlife are suffering as a consequence of rising temperatures. Land use change has resulted in habitat loss and, in some cases, warming. Pollution of our waterways has made some areas hazardous to swim in or to drink. We have poached and hunted many species to the brink of extinction. We are harming our planet at an irrevocable pace.

Sadly, these are just a few of the issues that our planet and its people face. These issues (and still many more) are at the core of today's social movements. The next section will explore social movements of today.

Social Movement Theory

In this section, I will begin to explore social movement theory as a framework for this research. I will include discussion of social movement theory and its application to the practice of canvassing as it presents in current literature.

Social movements are born from a place that desires collective and transformative change (Goodwin 2016). Some social movements seek to create transformative change in the world around you while others create space for personal transformation. When change is sought in social movements of today, the folks engaged are often looking for a means of changing how power is held and whose hands the power sits in (Turner and Killian 1957). They might even be seeking a change in cultural values. The canvassing movement, with its campaigns advocating for marginalized groups, environmentalism, and the like, falls under the umbrella of a social movement that is less concerned with personal transformation and more concerned with change for the betterment of the people.

Mirabito and Berry (2015) suggests that social movements hold their belief system that informs what they call a blueprint for action. The first belief is that there is a problem or grievance. In the case of canvass organizations, the problem is rooted in some form of inequality or injustice their campaign seeks to end. The second belief is that there is a responsible party. For the campaigns canvass organizations run, the adversaries are often political elites, the more conservative public, hate groups, and the like. Another belief social movements share is that there is a goal. For canvass organizations these goals are to increase contacts with the public, donors to the organization, and to

fundraise. The final belief is that there is a solution, and for canvass organizations and the groups they advocate for, the solution is to fight through lobbying, litigation, or purchasing power.

Social movements, in addition to having the ability to shift power and ideology, are also highly regarded as places where democracy itself can expand and be shifted towards rule by all people (Angus 2001). They become places where groups come together, find avenues for political participation that are underused or restricted, to find freedom, equality, and justice for all (Alinsky 1989; Macleod 2011). Although canvassing is growing in popularity, it is an underused medium for action. Popping up around the country in vacant commercial space, canvass organizations have come to house groups seeking an avenue for political participation. Additionally, due to the nature of the campaigns canvass organizations take on -- seeking freedom, equality, and justice - - they have become a part of today's social movements.

Social movements of the past challenged capitalist society. In contrast, new social movements are organized around race, ethnicity, youth, gender, sexuality, human rights, environmentalism, and other advocacy on behalf of marginalized groups (Buechler 2007). They are concerned with promoting expressive, identity-oriented actions (Buechler 2007). Group members today are also unique in that they cross-cut class categories, such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, and sexuality (Buechler 2007). Canvass organizations - with their teams ranging in race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality - fall into the category of participants in new social movements. Their actions - bringing together folks who identify as pro-choice, advocates, and activists - label them as part of new

social movements. Furthermore, I have categorized canvass organizations as part of new social movements because their campaigns are rooted in lobbying, litigation, or purchasing power on behalf of marginalized groups, the environment, and the like.

Theories from Other Streets

Fundraising canvassing is a rather new concept and given that, there has been only a bit of research conducted on it. This research becomes even more limited in research on the canvassers' experiences. In this section, I will explore relevant research as it relates to both. I will begin with Dana Fischer's current work, a case study on a single canvass organization, that explores canvassers attitudes towards canvassing in a longitudinal matter. From this work, I will provide a brief snapshot of current literature on canvassing and its place in today's social movements.

Dana Fischer's (2006) Activism, Inc. is a longitudinal case study exploring canvassers and their personal narratives about their canvassing experiences. Fischer's research explores a single canvass organization that she calls the "People's Project." The People's Project, she explains, began running canvasses in the early 1980's and, at the time of Fischer's study, they had more than 275 canvass offices across the nation. Fischer conducted in-depth interviews with every willing participant in 5 of those 275 offices. In all, she interviewed 114 canvassers in San Diego, California; Boulder, Colorado; Baltimore, Maryland; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Portland, Oregon. She also conducted follow-up telephone interviews with about 75% of her original respondents. Her survey design sought to provide opportunities for canvassers to reflect on their canvass experiences.

In each of her initial interviews, Fischer addressed the following range of topics:

1. The participants' education and professional experiences before being canvass staff.
2. The participants' personal motivation for joining the canvass team and their interpretations of why others might join a canvass team (specific to a summer canvass).
3. The participants' understanding of the canvass goals and their efficacy.
4. The participants' opinions on how the canvass affected their political and civic engagement.
5. The participants' intentions regarding how long they plan on remaining with the company and what they might do if and when they leave. (Fischer 2006)

In her follow-up interviews, she asked canvassers who had left the canvass what their motivations were for doing so. She asked all of her follow-up participants to reflect on both their previous canvass experiences and engagement. Following her line of questioning, Fischer prepared a small sampling of questions from the 1996 National Household Education Survey (NHES). Fischer, upon completing her interviews, compared the results of the NHES survey. This comparison allowed Fischer to draw conclusions about how her participants compared to others who had not necessarily canvassed.

Beyond her canvasser interviews, Fischer also conducted interviews with progressive groups, political consultants, and Anderson and Zwick, who are credited with

creating some of the best canvassing groups. Fischer contacted all the representatives from the groups People's Project canvassed on behalf of during 2005, for interviews. She was able to get in touch with and interview six groups. She asked those groups to identify how they engage with their donors. To better understand grassroots strategies, she also interviewed political consultants for the Bush and Kerry campaigns. In the latter interviews, she inquired about mobilization tactics to involve young people. Finally, in her interviews with Anderson and Zwick, she asked the two of them to provide their canvassing history and the histories of the organizations they worked for.

Canvassing as Strangling the Progressive Movement

Ultimately, Fischer's (2006) research allowed her to conclude that the outsourcing of grassroots campaigns are "strangling" progressive politics in the United States. In the sections that follow, I will present Fischer's research findings around three central themes:

1. Joining the movement: Canvasser's motivation for taking their campaign job.
2. Canvasser turnover: Exploration of why canvassers stay and leave the movement.
3. Later-in-life Activism: Understanding how canvass experiences impact a canvasser's attitudes toward future political, social, and civic engagement

For the sake of this project, I will include discussion of interviews only where applicable to canvassers future engagement. I will conclude with Fischer's recommendations.

Joining the Movement

In the third chapter of her book, “Making a Difference as a Canvasser: Jobs with a Conscience,” Fischer explores canvassers motivations for joining the canvass movement. While there are a few folks who happen upon the work, most of her respondents found the positions as part of a larger quest to make a difference (Fischer 2006). Fischer goes on to say that canvass offices provide young people with the opportunity to express their political leanings while getting paid for their work and that this narrative is evident in many of the canvassers experiences. For example, one of her participants stated that he used his summer to find a job that would allow him to advocate for the environment in ways that he had not yet experienced before (Fischer 2006:46).

While this was a pretty typical response for Fischer (2006), still some canvassers stated they joined the movement to further their personal interests. Furthering personal interest, for Fischer and her respondents (2006), includes a desire for political engagement or an opportunity to find a practical application of their collegiate studies. One common theme, throughout Fischer’s findings, is that canvassers believe that these are jobs with a conscience and that they are indeed making a difference.

Community in the Canvass Office

It is no secret that getting canvassers to join the movement is far easier than getting them to stay. Given that, it is no surprise that canvass organizations have to work hard to keep canvassers around. That is why canvass organizations try to identify quickly potential in its new canvass staff because they want canvassers invested (Fischer 2006). The investment makes it harder to quit, Fischer (2006) adds. Leadership positions

are just one of the reasons canvassers stay with the company, but what are the others? In this next section, I will explore canvasser retention.

“Canvass offices are designed to maintain community,” says Fischer (2006:32). In addition to their decorative walls full of inspirational quotes, canvass organizations foster relationships. Fischer (2006) says one of their most effective community building strategies are their pizza nights. Giving canvass staff a means of building friendship outside of work is a sure means of ensuring retention (Fischer 2006).

In addition to pizza nights, canvass directors also work to build relationships with their staff in a one-on-one setting through individual meetings (Fischer 2006). The relationships canvass directors have with their teams also become places that foster retention, as seen in the experience of one of Fischer’s (2006) participants, Dan. He claims that one of the reasons he continued to be pulled to the canvass was because he felt a personal obligation due to his friendship with his Canvass Director (Fischer 2006: 31). He went on to say that she [the director] made him feel personally responsible for the office’s ability to succeed and meet their campaign goals (Fischer 2006). This demonstrates the ability of relationships with a canvass director to pull in canvassers and retain them.

Canvass Offices as Institutions

Despite the pulls to stay, inevitably, canvassers leave and do so at alarming rates. In her work, Fischer explores how the institutionalization of canvass organizations lead canvassers to leave staff. She also contends, too, that the act of being pushed out is harmful to the progressive movement because canvassers become disillusioned with the

process. Drawing on her interviews and analysis, in the proceeding pages, I will discuss the institutionalization of today's canvass organizations.

Scripted Campaign Messaging

First, Fischer offers the idea that campaign messaging is a form of institutionalization in today's canvass organizations. Due to the nature of scripted messaging, her research suggests that canvassers become robotic-like over time in the presentation of the message as seen in her interview with Paul (Fischer 2006:25). Paul noted that although he understood the script is intended to convey sincerity quickly and efficiently, he also thought the nature of quick conversations that were impersonal made it hard to connect to his potential donors (Fischer 2006:25). His narrative provides evidence of the effects of institutionalizing canvassing.

Fischer (2006) argues that canvassers, like Paul, become robotic in part due because of how often canvassers are repeating the message. She notes that canvassers for the People's Project practice were saying this campaign message through various lenses for about an hour every day before going out into the field. She also suggests that reliance on a campaign message disempowers canvassers in their efforts to own the knowledge surrounding their campaign (Fischer 2006).

Under Pressure

Beyond campaign messages, Fischer noted that most of the standardization of offices she studied continued to make canvassers uncomfortable in their daily running. For example, she called upon the propensity of canvass organizations to quickly promote individuals. It is necessary for canvass organizations like the People's Project to make

leadership offers to gain investment from their newly hired field staff and to combat high turnover rates that canvass organizations experience (Fischer 2006). Fischer (2006) claims that quick promotions like these are detrimental because they put new canvassers in an uncomfortable situation - teaching something they have not yet mastered. The anxiety this stirs, evident in her interview with Brandon, can cause a canvassers' job performance to suffer.

Another example of institutionalization is a canvass organization's propensity to be results-driven (Fischer 2006). Fischer (2006) claims that through the focus on quotas, the canvasser actions become almost mechanic. She draws on the experience of her respondent Brook as an example. In her interview, Brook expresses a grievance with the mechanical process of getting folks to fill out postcards. Brook claimed that the pressure of quotas leads to the public's blindly filling out postcards (Fischer 2006). In a system of quotas, she argued, it does not matter whether or not someone cares or is informed as long as the canvasser gets a card filled out in the end (Fischer 2006:33). Brook, in the above example, felt as though she was not canvassing for real social change, but instead she was canvassing for postcards (Fischer 2006).

Although the quotas were not monetary in Brooks' case, the idea of feeling pressure to perform comes up in fundraising canvasses too. In Fischer's (2006) interview with Tarun, for example, there is a central theme of significant pressure to fundraise successfully. Like Brook, Taurun felt as though their only job was to produce. Taurun went on to say that the office's focus on money and it's public sharing of that information created some anxiety in canvass staff (Fischer 2006: 33). Although the experiences are

different between Brooks and Tarun, they both express a significant amount of pressure to perform. Fischer contends that this form of institutionalizing causes canvassers to become extremely frustrated, pushing them away from the canvass (Fischer 2006).

Dissatisfaction with Pay and Hours

Another way canvassers experience a push out of the canvass is through the pay structures canvass organizations use. Many canvassers have reported being significantly underpaid (Fischer 2006). Cheri, one of Fischer's participants, explains that it is hypocritical of canvass organizations to maintain poor and not-so-progressive labor practices (Fischer 2006:38). Many of Fischer's respondents expressed frustration with pay and hours. Lori, for example, spoke of her experiences losing her ability to maintain a personal life outside of the canvass (Fischer 2006). She recalls an expectation of housing traveling directors and the potential for being called into staff campaign actions (Fischer 2006: 41). These two incidents demonstrate to Fischer a perceived lack of care for personal boundaries and value of employees. For some, these become reasons for resentment that ultimately lead to their termination (Fischer 2006).

Fischer (2006) concludes that while canvass organizations advocate on behalf of important work, their ability to capitalize on the young people of our country is beginning to have significant and unintended consequences on social movements of today.

Later in Life Activism

In her later chapters, Fischer explores what she says are some of the unintended consequences of canvass organizations as they pertain to canvasser experiences. One of the major unintended consequences is that canvassers become fatigued when they are spit

out by a standardized system (Fischer 2006). One of Fischer's (2006) central arguments supporting this statement is that young people often leave canvassing and do not return to further employment opportunities in politics (Fischer 2006). She also notes that there is significant evidence that suggests that canvassers have become disillusioned with politics and are failing to continue to participate in political processes post-canvass (Fischer 2006). She concludes her argument by calling for a revolution and doing away with outsourced canvassing (Fischer 2006).

CANVASSING MY STREETS, AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

There I was, standing on the corner of Centre Street in a bright green T-shirt and colorful pants, armed with a clipboard. I was attempting to hail a passerby into a conversation about the environment campaign I was running. I wanted to tell them a story about the problems our environment faced, and the solutions my organization purposed. I wanted them to hear the Earth's story, our story, and my story.

Today is not much different. This thesis, in a way, is an attempt to hail you, its reader, into a conversation. This time, however, the conversation is not about an environmental campaign. Rather, I want to share with my readers my story and the stories of like-minded folks who line the streets of our nation today. In navigating what Smith would refer to as (2008) "Tricky Ground," I hope to create space for dialogues across differences. I want to tell them about problems canvassers face - that I faced - and the triumphs that come along with the problems. I want to share with my readers the solutions that will enable us to work better together to solve some of the world's most challenging problems.

I have chosen to begin my story with what Carolyn Ellis (1999) calls a "*Heartful Autoethnography*". Through this self-reflection of my own time as a canvasser, I hope to create for my readers and myself a sense of vulnerability (Ellis 1999). As I write, I will sit with feelings, thoughts, and emotions about my canvass experiences (Ellis and Berger 2002). I will use emotional recall and introspection to engage these experiences into my story. I will then link my personal and research interests into academic writing

(Richardson and St. Pierre 2008). I will begin with a discussion of my motivations for this research topic.

In my study, I have also engaged in ethnographic research for one group of participants - those who worked for Speak Out. My time spent canvassing and directing in Speak Out offices enables me to speak to my observations of those canvass staff members (Charmaz 2006). Conducting an ethnography allows researchers like me to provide an in-depth description of everyday life; in this case, in the lives of canvassers (Charmaz 2006). I will draw my ethnographic data from my field notes and personal recollection.

I will also explore autoethnographic research. My position as a former Speak Out canvasser and director position me to speak from my experience and the various lenses of experiences that frame my research. During both my ethnographic and autoethnographic research, I will weave Fischer's research in to provide talking points for self-reflection.

Motivations for this Research

It was the warm summer evening in August of 2015 when I first considered canvassing as my topic of research. I was walking home from my new job and on the phone with my good friend from the campaign trail, Bryn. I recall boasting about how excited I was to be working as an elementary-aged educator again. I told her about all the awesome people I was working with and the adorable children I had met. I told her how angry, sad, and raw I was still feeling about my departure from the campaign trail and that I was coping by reading Dana Fischer's (2006) "Activism, Inc." I went on to disclose to Brynn the pieces of Fischer's research I was questioning. While I agreed with

many of Fischer's assessments, I questioned her measurements of political engagement post-canvass.

"You know, Fischer finds that outsourced canvassing is bad for the progressive movement because canvassers leave the field of politics," I explained to Brynn. She sighed.

"Brynn, do you think canvassers are engaged in politics post-canvass?" I asked. I continued, "Can they not find ways other than a career in politics to be engaged?"

"Of course, Alex," she exclaimed. We dropped the subject.

I told Brynn I had spent the last week jumping through what seemed to be never-ending bureaucratic hoops to re-enroll in graduate school to complete my thesis. Brynn told me about a new boyfriend and her new campaign job. She told me all about the wonderful people she worked with and how drastically different it was than her experience working for Advocates for Action (she had worked there before working in my canvass office). In fact, she told me it was more akin to the experience she had working with me. I smiled, as I was fond of those experiences too. I began to reflect on our time together at Speak Out.

Brynn and I had worked together in what I often refer to as my "Glory Days" as a Canvass Director. We had run a powerful campaign, staffed by a large number of activists. Brynn helped me build that campaign from the ground up and through that experience, Brynn and I became very close friends. Our respective campaigns, however, ultimately lead us to different places. I was moved to Boston and she to Colorado. We kept in touch, and we would catch up on our nightly phone calls while discussing the

trials and tribulations of campaign life. The sound of Brynn's voice pulled me back into the conversation.

"Alex?" she called. "Are you going to study canvassers?" she asked. I heard a smile come across her face from the other end of the phone.

"No," I said. She sighed almost as to express disappointment with my response. "Those questions you have are important," she said. I begin thinking, *what if I did study canvassers?* It was that moment that I began considering canvassing as a thesis topic and these my research questions.

In subsequent conversations with Brynn, I recall experiencing what Ellis (1999) calls "vulnerability" beginning to inform my role as researcher. I told Brynn that I was full of self-doubt and fear, as I began thinking about what it would mean if I wrote about my canvassing experiences. What would all my friends and mentors from the campaign trail think? How would my canvass staff members perceive my work and my experiences? I was concerned given the death and possible suicide of Bailey, a canvasser who had worked on my campaign (I'll explore this and its impacts in the next section). How would this research affect that team? Will they use my research as a place to bring ill will towards our former workplace? Despite my feelings of insecurity, I knew that this was an indication that this is where the real work is (Ellis 1999).

Brynn lost her life in a tragic car accident in October of 2015. While I will never get the opportunity to share this research with Brynn, I can continue to write from a place of vulnerability the story that she inspired for her, for canvassers everywhere, and for

myself. Through this vulnerability and the inevitable discomfort (Well 2008), I aspire to shed light on the lived experiences of canvassers like myself and Brynn.

My Membership Roles

My role as strictly a researcher would be misleading if I did not address first my role as an employer, employee, or colleague to the respondents who also worked with Speak Out. My interactions with these particular respondents have shaped how they view their canvass work. In addition to recruiting, hiring, and managing them, I have trained many of them in the foundations of canvassing. Although it is my hope that through the cloak of anonymity and confidentiality we will hear honesty in these voices too, I must divulge that for some, the separation of my identity as a former employer, or colleague, and now as a researcher, may not be easy.

It is also significant to understand that my journey as a supervisor has not always been an easy one. In the peak of the canvass, one of my team members overdosed in what some believe to be a suicide. Bailey had worked with Speak Out for several months and was well liked by the staff. He had a beautiful presence, offering a friendly smile to anyone in need. In my experience, the nature of working towards common campaign goals fosters deep connections amongst canvass teams. For this reason, the loss and the grief around Bailey's death greatly impacted my team and myself. The sadness and anger lead my team to withdraw from my leadership and, in some cases, each other. It is my hope that this work will provide an honest reflection of the experiences of those canvassers, as well as my own.

Insider and Outsider

In the following section, I will discuss how my position as a Canvass Director leads me to occupy the roles of both an insider and outsider.

As a former canvasser myself, I am an insider. I have seen the inside of a few canvass offices. I have also spent a significant amount of time canvassing. Given this, I can relate to both experiences of being a part of a canvass office and the experience of canvassing in the field. For respondents who worked with Speak Out, I also have the experience of working within the same canvass model, for the same partner groups, and in some cases, with the same campaign messaging.

While my identity as a canvasser allows me to occupy space as an insider in the community, my position as a former Canvass Director lends itself to being an outsider to most of my respondents. While I did have a canvassing requirement for days canvassed and fundraising standards as a Director, these requirements were different than the requirements of canvassers. As a Director, I was required to canvass fewer days a week, and if I fell short of my weekly average fundraising standard, I was allotted more time to get my average up than a canvasser would have been. For these reasons, I have not had the experience of my job being in jeopardy due to personal fundraising requirements.

As a Director, I also had a different set of challenges in the workplace than a canvasser would have had. First, the hours invested in the canvass office greatly differed. In total, my six-day work week regularly totaled upwards of 80 hours. Not all this time was spent canvassing. I held more responsibility as a director; for example, I was responsible for posting job posters and handing out job flyers on local college

campuses. I was also responsible for recruiting folks who would call for an interview. When that person showed for their first day upon being hired, I was often the person who trained them both in the office and in the field. When a trainee did not make their fundraising standard, I was the one to hand them their final check. These differences set other respondents and I apart.

My Lenses of Experience

It is also significant to understand how I sit with the experiences of these canvassers. I see their experiences through two lenses: the first as a director sitting in the roles of mentor, trainer, and supervisor. The second, as a canvasser myself and in some cases, their friend. As a good majority of folks who walk into canvass offices do not have previous canvassing experience, for some of my respondents I was their introduction to canvassing. I taught some of them the messaging behind the campaign, how to effectively hail strangers on the streets into conversations, and how to make the most out of that rapport through the close of a new membership for one of our partner groups. I begin from my story and what lead me to join the canvass movement.

Myself as a Canvasser

I have been engaging in activism for nearly fifteen years and canvassing for three. Although I have not advocated recently for Lesbian, Gay, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ) issues, my activism at the young age of fourteen began on behalf of those very issues and would later lead me to my first canvass office. As a young person grappling with a bisexual identity, I was faced with constant adversity in my home, my school, my faith community, and in myself. I sought solace at a local LGBTQ resource center. The center

held groups for youth, aged twelve to seventeen, on weekday nights. Their programs offered a beautiful blend of community amongst other LGBTQ youth and tools to navigate on-going adversity outside of the center. I began attending regularly. This was not only a safe place for me but also the spark that would ignite the fiery passion for canvassing and activism in my later years.

In the next several years at the Center, I participated in marches, rallies, and protests commemorating The Day of Silence (a national youth-run effort using silence to protest the actual silencing of LGBT people in schools through harassment, bias and abuse), Harvey Milk Day (a celebration of the LGBTQ activist, Harvey Milk, who was assassinated in 1978), and Pride (a celebration of self-affirmation, the LGBTQ rights movement, community-building, and diversity). I also participated in facilitating youth group discussions around current events and navigating adversity. I left the center until my first year in college when I moved to Southern California for the year.

Upon my return just three years later, I found the center guided by different motivations. In May of 2008, California's Proposition 22, which served as a legislative statute forbidding the recognition and licensing of same-sex marriages, was found unconstitutional. LGBTQ communities throughout California and the rest of the United States joined in celebration together. Our celebrations, however, were short lived as we were sitting on the heels of the passing of Proposition 8. If it were to pass in November of 2008, this new proposition would reposition the previous proposition as a constitutional amendment, thereby circumventing the May 2008 appeal and reinstating bans on same-

sex marriage recognition and licensing. The LGBTQ community in California began rallying together in solidarity to fight back.

It was then that I began leading marches, rallies, and protests. I recall in great detail a particular action we took November 4, 2008. It was the night that the California majority successfully passed Proposition 8, violating the rights of the LGBTQ Californian minority. Hundreds of LGBTQ folks and their allies came together at a local government building to demonstrate our disgust. We sat silently in efforts to echo the silence that LGBTQ people and their relationships were experiencing in our legislative processes. We held signs that were hastily made, with markers and poster boards, only moments before. We distributed lit tea light candles that we had bought out from a local grocery store. We were holding a vigil for a death: the death of our rights as an LGBTQ community.

As we sat keeping vigil, two large pickup trucks began circling the block we hundreds occupied. They honked pointing to their driver's side door. We could see the brightly colored "yes on 8" messaging displayed proudly before our eyes. I recall looking around the block and peering into the faces of those that lined the streets alongside me. Each of their faces saddened and angered. I imagined that the two mothers I saw embracing their small child next to me were saddened because that ruling meant they could lose her. I imagined that the two men next to me, wrapped in one another's arms, were angry because they would no longer have the legal right to see one another in a time of terminal illness. I imagined that the young person next to me was grieving a type of love she would never be able to witness under the new law.

I remember crying myself tears of both simultaneous guilt and gratitude that this ruling couldn't take away my marriage. From my position of privilege, married to my queer partner, I felt I had to take action. At that moment looking around, I knew too we had power in numbers. I recall grappling with the idea that if all of these folks voted, coupled with our supporters elsewhere in the state, we could have potentially held on to our right to marry as an LGBTQ community. It was that connection coupled with my anger, sadness, guilt, and gratitude that brought me to my first canvass office.

In August, I earned my wings as a Canvass Director and would take over the office I had worked so hard to build up the summer before. I recall a great sense of pride as I watched folks I developed take on leadership. In my time as a Canvass Director, I would run canvass organizations in two states. Typically, my mornings would be spent recruiting and interviewing new folks to join my team. My afternoons were often spent canvassing with some of the most vibrant and loving people I have ever met. In the evening, I would compile reports demonstrating our daily numbers – the conversations we had, donors we acquired, and dollar amount we had raised. I would repeat this cycle on six days of the week, rarely vacationing or taking sick days.

Out of a sense of duty, I lasted as a Canvass Director much longer than I had originally anticipated – my single summer had quickly turned into three and the seasons in between. I terminated my employment with the canvass operation I worked for when I became frustrated with the amount of support I was receiving. I recall being frustrated that, in my employer's eyes, my office was only successful when it was sending out upward of 60 canvass shifts a week that averaged over \$150 a shift. In my office, I had a

hard time keeping canvassers past their first couple of days in the field. Additionally, when I was able to keep canvassers interested in the work, they often were unable to maintain a consistent weekly fundraising average that would result in the termination of their employment. The inability to build a team became rather frustrating and it was seemingly difficult to get the support from my superiors to do so. Ultimately, I terminated my employment with the canvass operation for which I worked in August of 2015.

The termination of my employment felt like a bad break up. I loved canvassing. I enjoyed the opportunity to canvass outside of some of my favorite places – scrapbooking stores, vegan cafes, and natural food grocers – and talking to like-minded folks. I loved connecting with people about the issues I care about and after some time, I felt knowledgeable around my presentation of these issues in the field. I also enjoyed the opportunity to connect with like-minded activists who wanted to be part of the broader movement my office was creating. However, at some point, these things could no longer keep me canvassing.

In the following section, I will discuss Dana Fischer’s “Activism, Inc.” and its relevance to my narrative developing this research study (2006). It is my hope that through weaving together Fischer’s text and my experience, I will be afforded the opportunity to discuss the motivations for approaching this research the way I did. I begin with an introduction to Fischer and her research as it pertains to my own.

Theories from My Streets

It was the fall of 2015 when I cracked open Dana Fischer’s “Activism, Inc.” (2006). I was captivated by Fischer’s exploration of canvassers and their experiences.

When I opened Fischer's book, I did not have expectations to begin a thesis on this topic. Rather, I was seeking solace amongst the pages of the lived experiences of others in canvass organizations. Fisher's text, however, piqued my curiosity. While the circumstances around my canvassing experiences took a bounce out of my step, it is not my experience that canvass organizations as a whole are harmful to the progressive movement as Fischer suggests (2006).

In this section, I will engage Fischer's (2006) work, weaving in my own personal experience. I will, once, again do so utilizing the same three central themes she outlines in her book: canvassers' motivations for taking their campaign job, an exploration of canvasser retention, and their political, social, and civic engagement. I have coded these themes as joining the movement, canvasser retention, and later-in-life activism.

Joining the Movement on My Streets

Canvassers join the movement for a variety of reasons. Many of my canvassers joined the movement during college - looking for either part-time work during the semester or summer work in our peak season. Lizzie, the canvasser who trained me on my first day and would become my canvasser later in the season, was an ambitious undergraduate student who was looking for summer work to add leadership experience to advance her graduate admissions opportunities. In Fischer's (2006) work with the People's Project, she also found summer canvasses to be mostly staffed by folks who were in college. Still, in my experience, this extends beyond summer employment. Some canvassers joined my fall canvass and enjoyed canvassing because of the part-time winter work hours that allowed them to pursue their education while earning income.

As also found in Fischer (2006), some of my canvass staff found their way into the canvass office because they simply needed a job. For example, a canvasser of mine named Tyler saw canvassing as an opportunity to earn an income after having moved across the country. He had just moved to the city I was running a campaign in and he was desperate for work.

Most of my canvassers had some personal interest, whether it was to take action on their political insights or to obtain real life application of their college learning. These findings are consistent with Fischer's (2006) findings. My canvasser Lane, for example, was a long-time field manager on my team (her employment spanning more than a year) and she was motivated purely by the desire to advance the cause. She was not necessarily interested in a large amount of leadership but was eager to get out and raise funds. For her, canvassing was an opportunity to express her political leanings. While another canvasser of mine, Nate, had studied political science and was looking for a real life application of his academic experiences. Nate's experience parallels Fischer's respondent, Dawn:

I figured it was a great way to actually get involved in what I had studied. It's better than waitressing and things like that, to make more--of a difference than some other jobs I could be doing (Fischer 2006:47).

Finally, there are candidates who are having trouble finding work who apply hoping to capitalize on a campaign offices cast of a wide net. My canvasser Stan, who was battling homelessness at the time of his acceptance of a job offer, was one of these canvassers. Fischer's (2006) work does not reflect this finding.

Regardless of why they join, it has been my experience that all of my canvassers, like Fischer's (2006) respondents, are hoping to "make a difference." They see their acceptance of the job offers and continued work for the organization as an opportunity to create change.

Why I Joined the Movement

It was the spring of 2013 and graduation was just around the corner. I had completed my coursework but still needed to finalize my thesis. I began looking for part-time work that would allow me to juggle thesis writing and earning an income. I had employment in the fall already worked out but desperately needed to find something in the summer. I stumbled across an advertisement on Craigslist that offered part-time jobs advocating on behalf of LGBTQ youth. Out of a desire to do something meaningful with my interim employment, I applied via an online application. I was offered an interview for a directing position in my initial contact with a Speak Out representative. I accepted, and would later take an Assistant Director position for the summer. Although I knew a directing position was not the part-time work I was looking for, I thought I would be able to continue work on my thesis on the fringes of work. I also knew that directing a canvass office would provide me significant leadership experience. Like Fischer's (2006) work, and my canvassers, I was motivated by making a difference and advancing my career.

Canvasser Retention in My Offices

It is no secret that canvasser retention is a struggle in most campaign offices. This was seen in Fischer's (2006) work and my experiences in my canvass office were no different. New canvassers were especially hard to keep around. Often times, canvassers

would state that they were departing because they needed a job that was stable. The implication being that the structure of canvassing organizations itself generate their instability. Canvassers also left because of the rejection and discouragement they faced in the field. Fischer (2006) codes this as discomfort in the field. The experience of canvassing, for new canvassers, can be full of fear. In some cases, it is the fear of not being able to get someone to donate or stop and talk to them. Still some left because canvassing, for them, was an interim until they landed their next job.

As seen in Fischer's (2006) work, some folks leave the canvass to return to school. She, for example, states that this was the case for 15% of her respondents. In my canvass staff, canvassers who left staff due to school were more common in the summer months. In the winter-months, canvass offices allow folks to take on part-time schedules in efforts to retain local staff who might be in school. Though it is my experience that most folks who work in the canvass during the summer months attend college in another city, it is not always the case. Often, canvassers are home for the summer, reconnecting with their more local families.

In addition to some termination reasons Fischer (2006) finds, some canvassers are terminated by the canvass organization. While most of these folks are terminated for consistently not meeting their fundraising quota, some are terminated for misconduct. Misconduct can be anything from being tardy too many times to not hitting your canvass shifts, to fraud, and anything in between.

Despite the extremely high turnover rate in canvass offices, it is possible to cultivate successful canvass teams that retain your very best. I, for example, had a few

folks on my team who had been with the campaign for several months to over a year. In Fischer's (2006) participant pool, she also found that median time spent working with the People's Project was three months. She did note, however, that this number was significantly higher than the national average she reports of two weeks.

My Own Retention

I have thought a lot about why I stayed with Speak Out for so long. Particularly because of the significant pressures I faced to leave. I, for example, did have a thesis to write. As a consequence, I also had crippling family pressure to complete it. I also had my own longing to fulfill my commitment to my education, my faculty at the university, and myself. Secretly, I was also really hoping for my weekends back (I forgot you lose them when you are thesis writing). I did, however, have some strong pulls to the company.

My first pull to the company was Casey, my Canvass Director. Casey and I were friends. We would often socialize outside of the office over a craft beer, karaoke, and board game nights. Casey knew the pressures I felt to return to my graduate work, but would often remind me that I had a yearlong commitment as a director to fulfill to the organization before departing. The pull to the canvass by relationships is consistent with findings in Fischer's (2006) work as evident in her dialogue with Dan. Following, I will explore the relationships that pulled me to the canvass.

Casey left Speak Out in August of 2015, and I was offered the opportunity to take over the position of Canvass Director. Casey and I kept in contact and continued to socialize. Casey would often call me to ask me how our office was, and would inquire

about either my personal fundraising or the fundraising of my canvass offices the camaraderie I felt with Casey kept me in the canvass. In some ways, I felt as though walking away from Speak Out would be walking away from Casey.

I was also pulled in by many of my canvass teams. I cared deeply about my canvassers and some of them I considered to be some of my close friends. I was particularly close to my canvassers Renee, Claire, Lane, and the late Brynn. I often socialized with them outside of the office at karaoke or brunch venues on the weekend. My relationships with them served as a pull into the canvass.

Other Canvass Directors across the nation were my friends, too. In addition to weekly calls with both regional and national teams, Speak Out brought the national directing team together a couple of times a year for intense weeklong training where nightly socializing was almost mandatory. These work-sanctioned training fostered relationships between various canvassing cohorts. These relationships also acted as a pull to the canvass for me.

I also had a significant relationship to a Director, who managed me, Erin. In addition to managing me in the spring of 2014, Erin oversaw my office at the time of Bailey's death. When I called Erin to tell her about Bailey's death, she flew to my city on an overnight flight and made herself available to my team and me. She was in my office and my home for the next month providing unending support and love. Erin was with me in some of the toughest times in my life and my career--through both mine and my canvass team's grief of Bailey's death and their subsequent union activity. Under the

guidance of Speak Out, Erin was incredibly good to my staff and I during that time. The support I received from Erin and Speak Out kept me in the canvass.

In Boston, the staff of Speak Out became my extended family. In addition to socializing weekly at trivia and karaoke nights, I lived with two of the directors who worked with me - Jill and Rae. Jill and I had grown close through our telephone communication during my first year as a Canvass Director. She was relocated to Boston to run the national recruitment project, and I was relocated to run the Boston canvass office. To make Boston's high rent more accessible, we became roommates. Rae joined our home in spring of 2015 when she was relocated temporarily for training to accept a lateral promotion. Part of her training included co-directing the Boston office with me for the summer. Intimidated by lengthy leases and pet rent, Rae asked Jill and I if she could share our home. Through the experiences of working in Boston and sharing a home, the three of us became good friends.

My partner also joined Speak Out's administration team in the summer of 2015. Due to the sheer numbers of occupants in our home who were employed by Speak Out, our home quickly became a hub for game and movie nights for Speak Out employees. I developed many close friendships in that time that I continue to maintain beyond my employment with the company. These relationships also provided a significant pull to the company. The idea of leaving Speak Out and turning my back on the company, felt as though I was turning my back on my relationships with them.

In the above relationships and experiences, I have demonstrated that my friendships kept me canvassing. This is consistent with Fischer's (2006) findings as seen in her respondent Dan's interview.

Beyond the relationships I had, I also loved advocating for incredible causes. I also believe that canvassing is some of the best work out there. I know that I have the potential to acquire 6 or more new donors for Speak Out's partner groups every day. I also know that every day I do not canvass, those partner groups miss out on the \$250 I would have raised. Furthermore, every day I was not recruiting was a day that I would not be able to get a new person in the door. I was driven by the idea of success in dollar signs and canvass team sizes. As a consequence, the idea of leaving Speak Out brought me feelings of significant guilt. Fischer's (2006) research found that folks at People's Project felt similarly. One particular respondent, Jessica, was motivated to stay because of her ability to build membership, raise money, and train activists (Fischer 2006).

While I deeply care about the people I worked with, for, and on behalf of, I also knew it was time to leave. I first felt this tension when I began to feel discouraged by the narratives of experience I was hearing from other employees at Speak Out. They noted that they were feeling uneasy with some of Speak Out's politics and, as a consequence, they felt it was time to go. While I did not always share their experiences, the act of witnessing these experiences of canvassers or directors I had developed became too much for me. These feelings of resentment began to pull me from the canvass.

Furthermore, in my final year as a Canvass Director, I found it hard to develop friendships with my staff. Grieving Bailey's death and the resulting tension in

relationships with my former canvass team made it hard for me to trust my ability to connect with current canvass teams in my new office.

Grieving the loss of their team member to an overdose and possible suicide caused a great deal of anger for my canvass staff. Some of them believed that working conditions at Speak Out [namely termination of another employee, who I call “Gertrude”] caused Bailey’s severe depression and subsequent death. Gertrude was Bailey’s mentor on the campaign who had been terminated three days earlier. Bailey’s reporting of an incident in the field led to Gertrude’s termination. Bailey died three days later in what some believe was a suicide. Within a week of these events Bailey’s death, my canvass team unionized to obtain better working conditions. They decided that unionization could help them advocate for canvassers like Bailey and Gertrude. Speak Out responded to their unionization by saying they were not interested in negotiation until the National Labor Review Board (NLRB) recognized the union. The canvass staff opted not to take their union to the NLRB. Angry, they began putting pressure on Speak Out to negotiate through actions that involved harassing me.

My good friends from the canvass were at the head of these actions. They organized sit-ins in my office space, which made it hard to do my work. They distributed flyers on my canvass sites with misinformation about my leadership and Speak Out while I was canvassing, making it difficult to procure donors. They called the office hundreds of times, making it harder to recruit. At night, they surrounded my car and office doors, preventing me from leaving. When I would not open the doors after hours and waited for them to pass, they pounded on my doors and screamed obscenities at me. While I

empathized with their cause and wanted my friends to feel cared for, my life as their supervisor was miserable and frightening. Erin had offered me the Boston office some months earlier, and I knew the experience was going to be short-lived.

I moved to Boston in October of 2015. When I got to my new city, my former canvass staff had remotely organized people in Boston to infiltrate my office. My new office environment began to feel triggering to me. As a consequence, I never stopped questioning my new canvass staff and was unable to find much space to trust them. Needless to say, I developed few and far between relationships with my canvassers in my new city. My offices, as a consequence, experienced high turnover consistent with Fischer's (2006) depiction of two-week retention.

Activism Post Canvass Office

The folks I canvassed with whom no longer work at Speak Out went on to do a variety of different jobs. As seen in Fischer (2006), a small percentage of them went on to explore other employment opportunities in politics. Most of these folks go on to canvass for other organizations, like Brynn. The majority of folks I know go on to do something completely different. Rae, for example, is waiting tables in her hometown. Jill is a barista, slinging coffee. Still some of my fellow canvassers found their ways into alternate career paths. However, the majority of my fellow canvassers found avenues other than employment to pursue their activism. In the following section, I will demonstrate the ways in which former canvassers find other ways to engage in their political, social, and civic experiences post-canvass.

It was the spring of 2015 I was witness to activism of former canvassers. Late on a spring evening Abraham, who worked across the hall in Speak Out's administration department, asked me to join a Black Lives Matter protest. "Wrap up your numbers [nightly reports], let's go! Others will be joining us," he said. When I arrived, I saw a large group of both current and former canvass staff. We joined the march to the interstate with hopes of blocking it in an effort to send the message that Black lives matter.

As a canvasser myself, I often met former canvass staff from Speak Out and other organizations in the field. These folks would often stop and talk to me about their experiences while hearing out my campaign story. Generally speaking, they often contributed a small financial contribution to my cause. Their continued involvement in these conversations further demonstrates that former canvassers find ways to stay engaged outside of the canvass.

Due to the nature of campaign work, I am connected to many former canvassers on Facebook. As a consequence, this primary season, I am somewhere close to having had seen every political meme about Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton ever created. I've also been witness to a multitude of political cartoons exposing the ills of Donald Trump. Pictures of friends at polling places are not too uncommon either. These actions demonstrate the engagement of canvassers post-canvass.

While I do not keep tabs on every former canvasser I have worked with, nor is my experience with any company other than at Speak Out; in my experience canvassers are engaged civically, socially, and politically in their post-canvass experience.

My Activism

While I no longer work within canvass organizations, I still consider myself to be politically, socially, and civically engaged. In fact, I would argue that my experiences canvassing led me to be more engaged than I was in the past. Before canvassing, I did not participate in the political process. I never voted (with the exception of in 2008 when marriage equality was on the ballot). I also never gave charitable contributions to candidates. This election season was different, however. I registered to vote, voted in the primaries, and made small contributions to the candidate I support five times. I also utilized social media in efforts to mobilize my community to do the same. I attribute my change in participation to my canvassing experiences.

I am also heavily involved in my community. I frequent marches, rallies, protests, and demonstrations related to advocacy work and political campaigns. I also attend community meetings, especially where there is an opportunity to advance advocacy work in that space. I attribute this experience, however, to my work with the Center as I began my involvement in these spheres prior to my canvassing experience.

I also believe that I am likely to continue the actions I have described participating in above. Though I identify as a burnt out canvasser, my crummy experiences canvassing have not led me to disengage with the political system. I still very much believe in the power of grassroots mobilization, widespread awareness, and advocacy work. I do not, however, see myself working as a full-time canvasser again. The decision to not canvass is not because I hate canvassing, but because I have moved

on and have engaged in other full-time opportunities. Canvassing, for me, was a stepping-stone to another place, and my advocacy will continue in other ways.

METHODS OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY

In attempts to understand how the experience of canvassing impacts a canvasser's attitude towards future political, social, and civic engagement, I utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodology. I administered surveys via a web link to current and former canvass staff across the nation. I received approval to conduct research by the Institutional Review Board at Humboldt State University on February 25, 2016. This research was conducted between February 2016 and April 2016. In the pages that follow, I will describe the methods of the national survey.

I will begin with an exploration of the demographics of my canvasser respondents and their canvass experience (issued canvass, who they canvassed with, title, pay, hours, canvass requirement, and current employment). I will transition into the criterion I used to select my participants. I will then engage in a brief discussion of my participants. Following, I will engage a discussion of my survey design. I will include discussion on how I analyzed my data, drawing on the works of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Charmaz (2006). I will explore my roles as both a researcher and a canvasser in this leg of the research. Finally, I will close with a discussion of the limitations and ethical considerations of this research study.

Survey Participants

This analysis incorporates data from 114 of canvasser respondents to my web-based survey: 75 completed the entire survey. In personal communication with me, some of my respondents noted that their web servers crashed and that they were unable to return to

the survey's web link. Whether they completed the survey or not, all of my respondents have canvassed with one or more of the canvass organizations that I described in the earlier introduction chapter.

Canvasser Demographics

I begin with an analysis of my respondents' demographic information. I lead the discussion with age and follow with gender, race, ethnicity, and education. Most (83%) of my respondents were 20-29 years old, and the mean age of my respondents is 25 years old. While my data indicates a high volume of young adult canvass staff, 10% of my respondents were older than 30 years of age.

Most (59%) of my respondents were female, with a good portion of my respondents (33%) identifying as male. The remaining 8% of respondents identified as 'Agender (4%),' 'Non-binary (3%),' or 'Transgender (1%).'

An overwhelmingly large portion of my sample was white (83%), though 13% of my respondents identified as Latino(a) or Hispanic. A small portion (5%) of my respondents identified as Black or African American and another 5% identified as Asian. Two participants (2%) each selected 'American Indian or Alaskan Native,' 'Indian,' and 'Pacific Islander.'

Table 1: Canvasser Demographics

Canvasser Demographics	Percent (Frequency)
Age	
18-19 years old	7% (7)
20-29 years old	83% (95)
30+ years old	10% (11)
Gender	
Agender	4% (7)
Female	59% (67)
Male	33% (38)
Non-binary	3% (3)
Transgender	1% (1)
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2% (2)
Asian	5% (6)
Black or African American	5% (6)
Indian	2% (2)
Latino/Latina or Hispanic	13% (15)
Pacific Islander	2% (2)
White	87% (99)
Education	
No GED/High School Diploma	1% (1)
GED/High School Diploma	4% (4)
Some College	31% (35)
Associate's or Technical Degree/Certification	4% (4)
Bachelor's Degree	51% (58)
Some Post Baccalaureate Work	6% (6)
Master's Degree	5% (4)
Doctorate/Doctorate of Law/Doctorate of Jurisprudence	1% (1)

Overall my participants were highly educated: 89% had completed at least some college and 57% had completed a Bachelor's or higher. Of those that graduate from college, 6% had engaged in some graduate level education. An additional 5% had

obtained a Master's Degree, and 1% had obtained a Doctorate, Doctorate of Law, or Doctorate of Jurisprudence. A small portion (4%) of my respondents had obtained an associate's degree, certificate, or another technical degree. An additional 4% of my respondents did not attend college but had obtained a high school diploma or GED. Only 1% of my respondents had not obtained a high school diploma or GED. This varies slightly from Fischer's (2006) work where she found that more than 60% of her respondents were still enrolled in school. Again, differences can be attributed to the number of respondents in my sample who identified as directing staff.

Canvasser Employment Status

Most of my respondents (62%) were no longer working with a canvassing organization at the time of the survey. In fact, only 11% of the remaining 27% of respondents reported currently working for a canvass organization. Moreover, 55% of the 114 respondents indicated they have quit a canvassing job in the past while only a small portion (18%) stating that they have not quit a canvass jobs. The next section offers an exploration of canvass staff's motivations to terminate their employment with canvass organizations.

Participation Criterion and Selection

Using a snowball sample methodology, I began with canvassers whom I had met along the campaign trail and were connected to me through social media platforms. Those canvassers then shared my post to recruit others who were a part of their teams. In this way, canvass staff I knew became "locators" of additional respondents (Biernacki and Waldrof 1981). Using this approach, I was able to acquire data from the canvassers

of multiple canvass organizations in varying cities across the country, from folks who I had not canvassed with, and canvasser respondents who live more transient lives (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian 2009).

As aforementioned, I collected data from my canvassing networks through the use of recruitment posts (Appendix A) and messages (Appendix B) on Facebook. My networks include paid canvassers who advocate on behalf of progressive issues. The following is a discussion of the criterion I used for inclusion and exclusion of participants in my research study. My first criterion for inclusion was involvement in canvassing. I also selected folks who had canvassed through their observation and training periods, which for most canvass organizations are three days. Upon receiving data from 116 respondents, I reviewed all responses. I threw out data from two individuals who reported canvassing a total of fewer than three days. I included canvass staff of any title ranging from hourly to salary staff, excluding no one.

Each of the folks who participated in this survey was selected by the criterion above and their willingness to participate. The first question in the survey included informed consent language (Appendix A). Respondents were instructed to print and keep the consent letter as a copy for their records. In this consent letter, respondents were offered contact information for folks who could answer questions for them in the event that they had concerns about this study or their rights as a participant of it. They also were instructed that their participation was voluntary, and they could stop at any point in time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

As members of the canvass community are so greatly intertwined, I have made a great deal of effort to cloak my canvasser respondent's identities. All of my respondents have been assigned pseudonyms. I have also assigned code names to the canvass organizations themselves. I explained that any other identifying information would also be coded to protect their confidentiality. Furthermore, any information linking pseudonyms to actual canvassers of the organizations they canvass for has been stored on a password-protected computer. Finally, in efforts of ensuring anonymity, I have disabled Survey Monkey's ability to track respondents' e-mails, unique URL, and IP addresses

Survey Design

The survey itself used a mixed-methods approach to discovery in that it contained both quantitative and qualitative components. Open-ended questions embedded within my survey gave participants the opportunity to engage in their lived experiences including their emotions, motivations, and their respective meanings to make sense of them (Berg and Lune 2012; Denzin and Lincoln 2008). In using a quantitative approach, I am offered an opportunity to make generalizations about variable relationships (Babbie 2010). The unique combination of both enables me to reach a wide net and engage with folks in meaningful discourse in efforts to answer my research questions.

The survey, taking approximately 20 minutes to complete, asked the respondents a variety of questions in efforts to understand both their canvassing experience and their political, social, and civic engagement. To grasp how a person's experience canvassing

might change their political, social, and civic engagement, the survey first sought to understand their involvement currently. I then asked canvassers to identify their attitudes towards their involvement with future political, social, and civic engagement.

To understand canvass demographics and how they play a role in both canvass experience and engagement, I asked canvassers to report their age, race, ethnicity, education, and canvass work experience. Finally, because one's experience canvassing can differ across a multitude of variables – pay, hours worked, title, and company worked for - I asked canvassers to identify these variables. For canvassers who have worked for more than one canvass operation in their canvassing experiences, I asked them to reflect only on their most recent experience (though, they reported to me all of the places they have worked). Additionally, canvassers were also asked to speak to whether or not they are currently employed by a canvass operation. If canvassers identified themselves as former staff, they were also asked to describe the circumstances leading to their termination of employment.

Utilizing a series of Likert scale tables, respondents were asked to identify their attitudes about canvassing, their training and preparation, their work and life balance, their experience with canvass management, and their experiences with the canvass team. In the first table, respondents were asked to define the relationship of canvassing and activism. In the following table, canvassers were asked to disclose how they felt about their field-readiness. In particular, I was interested in understanding if they felt as though they were adequately trained and knowledgeable when conversing with potential donors in the field. Canvassers were also asked to reflect on their work and life balance. In the

following table, respondents were asked to recall their experiences with canvass management. I was interested in discovering if the respondents felt as though they were offered opportunities for professional and personal development by their immediate supervisor. I was interested in understanding if their management teams heard their experiences. In the final table, I asked canvassers to reflect on their involvement with the canvass team. I was particularly interested in knowing if canvassers went to canvass socially, socialized outside of work, or considered fellow teammates their friends.

In the following section, I asked canvassers about their current political, social, and civic engagement. I measured civic engagement by contributions to charitable causes; attendance at events hosted by local or national groups and associations; and attendance at rallies, marches, or protests. I measured social engagement by the usage of social media to spread awareness around social ills. I identified current actions as those taken within the last twelve months. In efforts to understand political engagement, I asked canvassers to report whether they are currently registered to vote. I also asked them to disclose if they voted in the last national or local election.

To understand canvassers' attitudes towards future political, social, and civic engagement, I asked canvassers to use a Likert scale to reflect how likely they are to engage in community service, or to make a financial contribution towards a charitable cause in the future. I also asked canvassers to disclose if they were likely to participate in social events, marches, rallies, or protests organized by a group or on behalf of a cause. Canvassers also noted whether or not they were likely to utilize social media to spread awareness. Finally, I asked respondents to indicate if they were likely to vote in the next

election. The final segment of this survey aimed at understanding whether or not the respondent would take another position canvassing. I split this question into two groups, fundraising canvassers, and non-fundraising canvassers. If they answered no, I asked them to explain why. I have used my respondents' experiences as reflected in their survey responses as a framework for discussion.

Data Analysis

This research was analyzed using both the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for its quantitative components. In its qualitative components, which consisted of open-ended survey questions, I coded responses. Where appropriate, I approached my data from a grounded theorist's perspective (Charmaz 2006). I began by reading through all of the responses to my open-ended questions. In my first reading, I worked to identify recurring themes. I read through the responses two additional times, being careful to add and subtract themes where appropriate.

My Shifting Roles as Researcher and Canvasser

For folks who identified themselves as canvassers of Speak Out, it is important to consider the ways in which my role might have shifted in their lives. I once occupied the mentor, trainer, and supervisor to some of the canvass staff. Whereas, in my role as a researcher in this study, I occupy a different space. I am certain that this shift in roles for these folks may lead to a shift in the narrative for my participants. Whereas some might have been concerned with reporting to their supervisor or colleague about their experiences, they may now be more comfortable shedding light here. Some might also have had the opposite experience and may have felt more comfortable with me as their

supervisor or colleague than as my new position as a researcher. However, it is also possible that canvassers will feel a greater sense of anonymity and confidentiality through the survey instrument and thus more comfortable reflecting on their experiences.

Methodology Limitations

There are limitations in my research to consider. First, my sampling methods used social networking platforms for distribution. This limits participants to those who use these platforms. Due to the snowball sampling methods I employed, the participants of this study were limited to canvassers that are connected to myself or folks I know. Due to this, there is a potential for sampling bias where subjects may have the same characteristics and traits as others who participated. For example, the majority of my canvasser respondents are from Speak Out and as a consequence, I am limited in my ability to generalize across all canvass organizations. Furthermore, my sample is comprised of mostly white canvassers who are in between the ages of 20 and 30 years old. As a consequence, I am limited in my ability to generalize my results across varying groups.

A SURVEY OF THE NATION'S STREETS

In this chapter, I will explore the results from my national canvasser survey from 114 respondents. Following, I will report on their reflections on their work experience. I will examine their motivation to canvass and their attitudes about their canvass experience. Mainly, we will examine whether or not they felt supported by management, adequately trained, safe in the field, and satisfied with pay and work-life balance. Then, I will discuss my findings related to my canvasser respondents' current level of political, social, and civic engagement. I will follow that with a discussion of their attitudes toward future political, social, and civic engagement.

Canvassing Experience

At the time of their most recent employment, only 36% of my respondents identified themselves as Field Managers and Canvassers (Table 2). A significant portion of my respondents (37%) identified as more recently directing or senior leadership staff. Their positions are important because the level of commitment to a campaign and the accompanying responsibility for its success is far greater in directing and senior leadership staff. Most of my respondents (60%), however, had spent some time as either Field Managers or Canvassers. Given this, their responses can be used to make inferences about the experiences of canvass staff.

Table 2: Canvassing Experience

Canvassing Experience	Percent (Frequency)
Current/Most Recent Title within Organization	
Canvasser	36% (41)
Assistant Director	8% (9)
Canvass Director	24% (27)
Senior Leadership	5% (6)
First Title within Organization	
Canvasser	59% (67)
Assistant Director	14% (16)
Canvass Director	0% (0)
Senior Leadership	0% (0)

While Fischer's (2006) research is on a canvass organization she calls the 'People's Project,' my research includes a multitude of canvass organizations. The participants in this research come from a variety of canvass organizations including 'Act Now,' 'Advocates for Action,' 'Cooperating Cultures,' 'People Power,' 'Speak out,' 'Various Elections,' and 'Other' (Table 3). These organizations are very similar in their organizations. Most of my respondents (63%) identified as having spent some time canvassing for 'Speak Out.' Five participants (5%) each selected 'People Power' or 'Other' when indicating their canvass organizations, while 3% identified as former or current canvass staff of 'Cooperating Cultures' and 4% identified as being affiliated with 'Act Now.' An additional 15% of respondents identified as canvassers of 'Various Elections.' None of my canvassers identified as primarily canvassing (or canvassing at all) with 'Advocates for Action.'

Table 3: Canvassing Experience (Organizations and Issues)

Organizations and Issues	Percent (Frequency)
Canvass Organizations	
Act Now	4% (4)
Advocates for Action	0% (0)
Cooperating Cultures	3% (3)
People Power	5% (5)
Other	5% (5)
Speak Out	63% (72)
Various Elections	15% (17)
Primary Canvass Organization	
Act Now	2% (2)
Advocates for Action	0% (0)
Cooperating Cultures	2% (2)
People Power	2% (2)
Other	3% (3)
Speak Out	63% (72)
Various Elections	0% (0)
Issues Canvassed	
Animal Rights and Advocacy	11% (12)
Education Reform	18% (21)
Elections	27% (31)
Environmental Justice	51% (58)
Homelessness/Poverty Issues	24% (27)
Humanitarian Relief Aide	63% (72)
Indigenous People's Rights	5% (6)
Immigration Reform	12% (14)
LGBTQ Rights	48% (55)
Prison Reform	12% (14)
Racial Equality	28% (32)
Women's Rights	55% (63)

My participants, in their respective canvasses, advocated on behalf of many issues including Animal Rights and Advocacy,' 'Education Reform,' 'Elections,' 'Environmental Justice,' 'Homelessness or Poverty Issues,' 'Humanitarian Relief Aide,'

‘Indigenous People’s Rights,’ ‘Immigration Reform,’ ‘LGBTQ Rights,’ ‘Prison Reform,’ ‘Racial Equality,’ and ‘Women’s Rights’ (Table 3). Most of my canvasser respondents have spent time canvassing on behalf of humanitarian relief aid (63%), environmental justice (51%), LGBTQ rights (48%), and women’s rights (55%). A small portion of my respondents had spent time canvassing for indigenous people’s rights (5%), animal rights and advocacy (11%), immigration reform (12%), and prison reform (12%). Still some of my respondents canvassed elections (27%), homeless or poverty issues (24%), and racial equality (28%).

Earnings, Hours, and Workweeks

At the time of taking the survey, my respondents had spent a considerable amount of time canvassing. In fact, the average amount of time canvassing across all organizations was about two years (Table 4). The shortest duration of employment was 1 month and the longest was 108 months. A two-year average is considerably longer than Fischer’s (2006) respondents and the research she cites that suggests the national average is two weeks of employment. My sample was more committed to canvassing as evidenced by much longer than average careers in the field.

Table 4: Canvass Experience (Earnings, Hours, and Workweeks)

Earnings, Hours, and Workweeks	Numerical Value
Duration of Employment (in months)	
Mean	21
Median	14.5
Range	107
Minimum	1
Maximum	108
Estimated Weekly Net Earnings (in dollars)	
Mean	\$521
Median	\$454
Range	\$1330
Minimum	\$100
Maximum	\$1440
Estimated Weekly Canvass Time (in days)	
Mean	4
Median	4
Range	6
Minimum	1
Maximum	7
Estimated Work Week (in hours)	
Mean	53
Median	50
Range	76
Minimum	16
Maximum	92

Respondents in my study reported working an average of 53 hours a week, which can be attributed to the number of directing staff participants. Directing staff are salaried employees and work much longer hours than the average canvasser. They also reported earning an average wage of \$521 a week (Table 4). The longest workweek reported by my respondents was 92 hours and 16 hours was the shortest. Some of the respondents

noted that their hours working fluctuated depending on what their assignments were. A few of my respondents also reported that when they worked election campaigns, their hours tend to run upwards of 90+ hours a week. This demonstrates a stronger dedication to canvassing than an average canvasser.

During their workweek, my respondents also reported canvassing an average of 4 days in the field (Table 4). Those in senior leadership positions, or who are working part-time, reported only canvassing one or two days per a week. Whereas those who reported being full-time canvassers, canvassed five days per a week. Those respondents who reported working elections canvassed the most, weighing in with six or seven canvasser days a week.

Motivations to Join the Movement

In previous research, it has been suggested that many canvassers join a campaign office with the hopes of finding meaningful work that allows them to make a difference (Fischer 2006). Still it has also been discovered that some canvassers join the movement because they would like to advance their careers. Research suggest that canvassers are particularly motivated to further their involvement in political engagement to enhance their academic experiences (Fischer's 2006). Through multiple readings of open-ended responses from my respondents, these three central themes emerged from my coding:

1. Making a Difference
2. Professional Advancement
3. Obtaining Work Experience

Most (36%) of my respondents identified with the theme of canvassing to make a difference. Still some (18%) said that their primary motivation to canvass was driven by a need for work experience, although they recognized the work that they were doing was important. A small percentage (2%) of respondents reported that their involvement in canvassing was driven by their desire to advance their respective careers. These results parallel Fischer's (2006) findings. She, for example, found that most of her canvassers were motivated primarily by a drive to make a difference (Fischer 2006). She also found that smaller portions of her respondents were motivated by a desire to advance their careers or gain work experience (Fischer 2006).

Why They Stay

It is not secret that turnover rates in canvass organizations are extremely high. Given this, once canvassers are in the door, a canvass organization has to work hard to keep the turnover rates of their staff low. One way that they do is by providing opportunities for canvassers to socialize. Often, this comes in the form of hosting weekly pizza nights for canvassers. These events, in my experience, are well attended. Of the participants that responded (70%), most (58%) of my respondents attended canvass socials with some regularity. The remaining 12% were inconsistent in their attendance of socials or chose not to attend socials at all. With such a high attendance, it is not too surprising that 60% of respondents agreed to some degree that members of their canvass teams were their friends. Socials enabled canvasser staff to foster relationships within the company. Most (65%) even claimed that socializing with members of their canvass teams outside of work or work-sanctioned socials, was common in their experience. Canvass

socials and the subsequent relationships and friendships that develop in part because of them provide canvassers a significant pull to stay with the company. These findings are consistent with Fischer's (2006) work. She sites, for example, many instances where her canvasser respondents noted that they had built relationships with fellow staff members (Fischer's 2006). These relationships, she found, lead to a longer retention of some canvass staff (Fischer 2006).

While it is true that friendships amongst canvassers within an organization do often provide a pull to canvass, research suggests that there are other pulls to continue canvassing. Fischer (2006), for example, finds that canvassers continue canvassing because they care an awful lot about the issues. They see canvassing as a medium to advocate on behalf of the important issues. Further demonstrating this phenomenon, 53% of my respondents identified themselves as activists who see canvassing as an extension of their activism. A slightly smaller percentage (49%) feel they are making a difference when they are canvassing. These findings provide more evidence of canvassers' pull to remain in the canvass.

Why They Leave

Previous research suggests that canvass staff are motivated to leave for a variety of reasons (Fischer 2006). These reasons, Fischer (2006) offers, include returning to school, or overall dissatisfaction with some aspect of work or the canvass organization. Canvassers were asked to indicate their reasons for termination of their employment if they had quit a canvassing job. Through multiple readings of open-ended responses from participants, three central explanations for termination emerged. They are as follows:

1. End of campaign
2. Pulled to pursue other interest or demands (school, travel, health)
3. Pushed out because of organizational and field factors (pay, management, field fatigue)

Of those respondents who affirmed that they had quit a canvassing job (55%), 23% were pulled by other interest or demands including school, travel, health, or other employment opportunities (Table 9). Of the 23% who identified as being pulled from the canvass, most (11%) left to travel. Still some (7%) quit due to medical reasons, citing severe anxiety triggered by demands of the job. A small portion (3%) left to pursue school and a smaller portion (2%) went on to explore other employment opportunities. A larger portion of my sample (27%) claimed to be pushed out because of organizational and/or field factors (Table 9). Most of the 27% who identified as being pushed from the canvass (16%) claimed the termination of their employment was because they were fatigued by their field experiences. Still some (9%) of my respondents terminated their employment because they became dissatisfied with the canvassing organization or its management. A smaller portion of respondents (7%) claimed that their termination of their employment was the result of dissatisfaction with the hours required or compensation their position offered. Finally, a small portion of my respondents (4%) left because their campaign ended.

Table 5: Motivations to Leave Staff

Motivations to Leave Staff	Percent (Frequency)
Pulled to pursue other interest or demands	
School	34% (25)
Travel	3% (2)
Medical Reasons	16% (12)
Other Employment Opportunities	10% (8)
	4% (3)
Pushed out because of organizational and field factors	
Dissatisfaction w/ Job or Field Fatigue	40% (30)
Dissatisfaction w/ Management or Organization	24% (18)
Dissatisfaction with Pay or Hours	13% (10)
	3% (2)
Campaign End	6% (4)
End of Campaign/Commitment	6% (4)

While the percentages of folks reporting leaving because of workplace tensions are not heavily weighted in my sample, many of my respondents identified with feeling these same tensions in their work experience. The following data is based on the 77 canvass staff who responded (68% of the total population). Most (66%) of my respondents who responded identified with the theme of a poor work to life balance. A slightly larger portion of respondents (43%) felt as though they were not safe from harassment in the field. Additionally, when plugged, most (71%) of my respondents identified with the theme of canvassing taking a huge toll on their minds and bodies. It is no surprise then that with the requirements of the job (exceedingly long workweeks, perceived unsafe and exhausting working conditions) 59% thought they were under compensated in their work. This data provides further evidence of push factors that can lead to a canvasser terminating their employment.

In addition to the aforementioned common workplace tensions, canvasser respondents were also asked to report on their experiences with management. The following data is representative of the 77 canvass staff who responded (68% of the total population). Most of my respondents reported positively on their experiences with management. For example, 53% believed that management listened when they voiced their concerns compared to 29% who stated otherwise. Furthermore, 51% and 56% (respectively) believed that management gave them plenty of opportunities for personal development and professional development. This was compared to 25% and 18% of respondents who felt otherwise. This data provides further evidence of pull factors that keep canvassers canvassing.

Political Engagement

While this research suggests that there is substantial evidence of canvassers quitting their canvass jobs, there is also evidence to support that they continue to remain engaged beyond their respective canvass offices. For example, 96% of canvassers who responded report that they are registered to vote and most (65%) of them claim to be active voters. Of those who responded, 65% voted in the local and national elections. This is a substantial increase in voting given that only 45% of young people (18-29 years old) voted in the 2012 election according to national data (CIRCLE 2013). Additionally, when asked about their future voting behaviors, 71% said they were likely to vote. This demonstrates evidence that supports the idea canvassing does not hinder political engagement.

Civic Engagement

This survey also presents evidence of canvassers future civic engagement. For example, of the canvass staff who responded 85% claimed that they are likely to engage in community service. While 9% remained neutral on the topic, only 6% disagreed with the likelihood that they would engage in community service. A large portion 71% stated that they are likely to participate in future marches, rallies, protests, or demonstrations. This is compared to 4% who said they were unlikely to do so. Finally, most (82%) reported that they would likely donate money to a cause. Given these findings, there is a reasonable amount of evidence to support the notion that canvassers are likely to remain civically engaged post-canvass.

Social Engagement

Canvass staff who responded to the survey also provided evidence of future social engagement in their responses. For example, most (78%) of those who responded stated that they were likely to attend social events that advocate for an important cause. A good portion (74%), too, were inclined to use social media to share the political news with their peer groups. With only 1% and 13% of respondents (respectively) not identifying with statements indicating future social engagement, there is reasonable evidence to support the idea the canvassers remain socially engaged post-canvass.

Future Canvassing

Despite my canvass staff's reported discrepancies with canvass organizations and aspects of their jobs, most (57%) said they would take a non-fundraising canvass position again. This is in stark contrast to the 22% who stated that they would be unwilling to

canvass in that position. Many canvass staff (51%) stated they would be unwilling to work as paid fundraisers again compared to 26% who indicated that they would take a similar if not the same job again. When plugged further, most canvass staff did state that they would not be willing to canvass on a full or part-time work basis, but that they could see themselves canvassing as part of a volunteer opportunity in addition to their workweeks. While this data indicates that canvassers are overwhelmingly not likely to canvass in a fundraising position, it does suggest that former canvassers are interested in canvassing in non-fundraising position. Given this, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that canvassers in this study are not burnt out on the political process.

Predictors of Future Engagement

While there is substantial evidence to support the idea that canvassers continue to participate in political, social, and civic engagement post-canvass, there remain a few unanswered questions here: What are the tendencies of canvass staff members who are pushed out by the demands of the job and/or field factors to vote, act, give, or engage in the political process in the future? Is there a relationship between a length of time with the company and future engagement?

Departure Reasons and Individual Engagement Variables

As discussed earlier, the reasons canvassers left the field were recoded into three categories: pushed out (based on characteristics of the job), pulled out (due to external demands), or quit at the end of a campaign. Pushed canvassers were more likely (86%) to engage in non-fundraising canvasses than pull canvassers (49%) or canvassers whose

commitments ended (3%). A 3 x 2 chi-square test indicated that the relationship between departure reason and later canvassing was significant, $\chi^2(18, N=114) = 49.067, p \leq .01$.

Pushed out respondents were also slightly more likely (63%) to canvass in a fundraising capacity than pulled canvassers (62%) and much more likely than canvassers who commitment ended (10%). A chi-square test indicated that the relationship between reason for quit and predictions about canvassing in a fundraising capacity were significant, $\chi^2(18, N=114) = 42.191, p \leq .01$.

Pushed canvassers were more likely (92%) to engage social media actions than pulled out canvassers (43%) or canvassers whose campaigns ended (16%). A chi-square test indicated that the relationship between the reason for quit and predictions about engaging in the sharing of political news via social media was also significant, $\chi^2(18, N=114) = 44.011, p \leq .01$.

Canvassers who were pushed out were also more likely (96%) to predict that they would vote in national and local elections. Whereas, pulled out canvassers (26%) and canvassers whose campaigns ended (7%) were less likely to self-report voting in future elections. This finding did prove to be statistically significant in a chi-square test: $\chi^2(18, N=114) = 44.072, p \leq .01$.

Canvassers who were pushed out were also more likely (75%) than pulled out (54%) or canvassers whose campaigns ended (8%) to take action through their attendance in a march, rally, protest, or demonstration. The relationship between canvassers reason for leaving and their predictions about engaging in future actions proved to be statistically significant in a chi-square test, $\chi^2(15, N=114) = 42.779, p \leq .01$.

Pushed out canvassers were also more likely to engage in community service (86%) than pulled out canvass staff (52%) or canvassers who departed when their campaigns ended (9%). The relationship between reasons for leaving canvassing and predictions about community service were statistically significant, $\chi^2 (18, N=114) = 39.176, p \leq .01$.

Finally, canvassers who were pushed out (80%) were also more likely than canvassers who identified as being pulled out (51%) or departing due to a campaign end (13%) to donate to a cause. This relationship was also statistically significant, $\chi^2 (15, N=114) = 34.955, p \leq .01$.

Table 6: Reasons for Leaving and Likelihood of Engagement

Type of Engagement	Pushed Out	Pulled Out	End Campaign	Chi Square Value
Canvass Non-Fundraising*	82% (18)	49% (12)	3% (1)	49.067
Canvass Fundraising*	63% (6)	62% (6)	10% (1)	42.191
Social Media*	92% (26)	43% (12)	16% (4)	44.011
Vote*	96% (28)	26% (16)	7% (4)	44.072
Take Action*	75% (23)	54% (15)	8% (2)	42.779
Community Service*	86% (28)	52% (17)	9% (3)	39.176
Give*	80% (25)	51% (16)	13% (4)	34.955

* $p \leq .01$

Canvass Time and Composite Engagement Scores

The longer canvassers had remained in the field; the more likely they were to predict that they would engage in some political, civic, or social work. Time canvassed and a composite score based on predictions of future engagement were positively related, $r(56) = .2, p \leq .01$. Additionally, in a bivariate correlation analysis, time canvassed and the same composite score had a weak positive correlation ($r=.2$), $p \leq .01$. These relationships were counter to my expectations that they would have no relationship. While the relationships were not statistically significant, that is likely explained by the small sample size ($n=58$). This is an area which warrants further research.

The gender of canvassers also did not have an effect on predictions about engagement. There were no differences between female, male, or non-binary identified respondents and their likelihood to indicate they would engage. An independent groups t-test revealed that Females ($M=23.67, SD=4.63$) did not differ from Males ($M=22.38, SD=5.03$), $t(53)=.940, p \geq .01$. They also did differ from respondents who identified as

Non-Binary ($M=22.00$ $SD=5.244$), $t(40) = .749$, $p \geq .01$. Additionally, Non-Binary respondents ($M=22.00$ $SD=5.244$), did not differ from Males ($M=22.38$, $SD=5.03$), $t(21) = .152$, $p \geq .01$.

While females and non-binary identified canvassers were more likely to report leaving for reasons related to burnout (Table 7), these differences were not statistically significant. A 3 x 2 chi-square test indicated that the relationship between gender and a composite variable indicating burnout was not significant, $\chi^2(2, N=58) = 3.9$, $p \geq .01$.

Table 7: Canvasser Gender and Burnout

Burnout	Female	Male	Non-Binary
Burnout (n =35)	59% (23)	50% (7)	100% (5)
Non-Burnout (n=23)	41% (16)	50% (7)	0% (0)

The burnout of canvassers also did not have an effect on their predictions about future engagement. There were no differences between burnout identified respondents and their likelihood to indicate they would engage. An independent groups t-test revealed that burnout ($M=23.87$, $SD=4.49$) did not differ from non-burnout ($M=23.66$, $SD=5.31$), $t(39) = -.132$, $p \geq .01$. This warrants further research as this could be explained by small sample sizes.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CANVASSING

This final chapter serves as a summary of my findings. Previous research on canvass staff has been employed as a tool to analyze themes that have emerged throughout this research. A review of findings echoes a need for a revolution in canvass management but does not support the claim that canvass organizations hinder social movements by mismanagement of canvassers. Following a review of findings, there is consideration given to the limitations of this and other research on canvassing. In conclusion, recommendations are made for continued research and organizational changes.

Autoethnographic Summary

Through reflections of my canvass experiences, I found many themes that were consistent with other research. In particular, I found similarities amongst the reasons I joined the canvass, the reasons canvassing became important to me, what I liked and disliked about working for a canvass organization. I did also find, however, that there is a significant difference amongst my experiences and those found in other research. Particularly, there were differences in my post-canvass attitudes about political, social, and civic engagement beyond the canvass when compared to Fischer's (2006) work.

When I joined the canvass staff, I was mostly interested in joining the movement because I felt canvassing would offer me an opportunity to make a difference. Over time, canvassing would quickly become an extension of my activist identity. I enjoyed the opportunity to engage in building community awareness about issues I cared about while

simultaneously building up the membership donor base for progressive groups. I was also attracted to canvassing because of its career advancement and practical applications of my academic experience.

Like most of Fischer's sample and my canvass respondents, I did quit my canvass job. Employment opportunity working with youth and the opportunity to complete my graduate thesis pulled me. While I found my experiences to be good overall, I did feel some push to leave. The themes I most identified with were long hours, poor work-to-life balance, low pay, and significant campaign pressure. My workweeks were long, there was little compensation, and the pressure to recruit large teams, train them quickly, and produce dollars was high. Additionally, I found it hard to connect with the community outside of the canvass office because of limited time off and an overwhelming sense of fatigue I felt when I was off work. Instead, my free time was often spent attending canvass socials or catching a wink or two of rest.

While I had my fair share of awful campaign experiences, I would not say that I am burnt out on the political system. I, for one, would argue that my canvassing experiences (the non-awful ones) might have even made me more likely to engage in the political process. As an alumni of Speak Out, I continue to find ways to stay active in my post-canvass engagement. I, for example, voted in the primary elections, have attended actions, and contribute to causes and candidates I support. These measures demonstrate my continued involvement with the political process despite my termination from the canvass organization.

Quantitative Summary

My online survey participants' responses echoed many themes found in other research on canvassers (Fischer 2006). Canvassers noted similarities amongst the reasons they joined the canvass, canvassing's importance to them, their likes and dislikes about working for canvass organizations and their experiences in a canvass office. There were also differences between my respondents and those of Fischer (2006) post-canvass political, social, and civic engagement

Canvass staff who participated in my research were mostly interested in joining the movement because they felt canvassing would offer them an opportunity to make a difference, echoing Fischer's (2006) work. Many described canvassing as an action that allowed them to sit more fully within their activist identities. They talked about their jobs as necessary measures to create social change. The ability to build membership donor bases and to raise money for causes they believed in were shared values amongst my respondents.

Employment within the canvass office was not common amongst my canvasser respondents during the February to April 2016 window. Many of them had reported that they quit their canvass jobs. They cited pulls towards other demands or interests, the end of the campaign, or push away from the organization by field fatigue or other field factors as reasons for departure.

Although most had quit, some of my canvass staff respondents reported that their experiences in the canvass office were incredibly supportive. Nearly all of them expressed that they had developed significant relationships with supervisors and peers. A

vast majority of my respondents reported that they socialized with supervisors or peers outside of work or work-sanctioned socials. These relationships acted as a means of keeping canvass staff within the canvass.

Whether they had quit or not, nearly all of my respondents expressed concerns about their respective employments with canvass organizations. They expressed significant concerns about their low compensation, hours worked, and a desire for more professional or personal development opportunities. Many also gave considerable discussion to the high expectations of canvass organizations and the adverse impacts that those expectations had on their mental, emotional, or physical well-being. Common concerns around expectations included a discussion of exceedingly high and seemingly unattainable quotas, street harassment, and harsh rejection canvass staff experienced in the field.

While it is clear that canvass staff certainly have grievances with some of the conditions in their workplace, my research suggests many of them continue to remain engaged. Many of my respondents, for example, self-reported a high probability of voting. Some reported having voted in the last local and national elections. They also reported a high likelihood of engaging in community service. Still, some said they would be likely to attend a social event, march, rally, protest, or demonstration. Canvass staff also reported that they would be willing to canvass, though the likelihood of participation increases if canvassing is non-fundraising. In some cases, canvass staff also reported that they would be likely to contribute financial gifts in the future. These findings suggest that canvasser engagement does not halt as a consequence of canvassing involvement.

Predictors of Future Engagement

Data from this study indicates that canvass organizations and their mistreatment of employees do not hinder future political engagement. While most of my canvasser respondents indicated a burnout as the cause of termination of their employment, they also reported that they would be likely to engage in the future. My data suggests that the longer an individual canvasser, the more likely they are to participate in future engagement.

My data did also indicate that gender played a minor role in canvass experiences. Females, for example, were more likely to report that they burnt out in the canvass environment. Gender, however, did not play a role in predicting future engagement.

Canvassing and Field Fatigue

Fischer (2006) does bring important discussion pieces that have been corroborated in my research. For example, her attention to the very real phenomenon of field fatigue and burnout. Many of my canvass respondents identified with this theme. When plugged, they reported high-stress levels while on the job in their reflections on their work experiences. Again, citing long hours, little compensation, unattainable quotas/goals, street harassment, and rejection as the culprits of field fatigue.

Of those that did quit their canvass jobs, most felt pushed out by the demands of the job. Even those canvassers, did report that they were likely to engage in the political process in the future.

Limitations

This research does have notable limitations. One limitation is that this study is that it relies on self-selecting into the data pool. It is possible that more engaged canvassers are more likely to participate in research studies like this one. Another limitation is my role as an insider. It is likely that respondents reported differently to me than they would have another independent research due to my role as a former Canvass Director. My role may influence canvassers willingness to share and the types of things they share. Its dependency on self-reporting also limits my data. Self-reporting may lead to selective memory, telescoping, or exaggeration of the facts. Finally, my data is predominantly drawn from Speak Out employees: One must be cautious in generalizing these findings to employees of other canvass organizations.

Recommendations

Given that I did find significant evidence to support the claim that canvassers are dissatisfied with their canvass experiences, my recommendations are for canvass organizations to work towards minimizing these effects. My findings suggest that canvassers are dissatisfied with the demands of their work schedules. Given this, there is a need to find an appropriate balance between running successful campaigns and maintaining an appropriate work-to-life balance for the campaign's staff. One way to accomplish this is to decrease hours worked by individuals by increasing coverage in the campaign office. One way to accomplish this is to hire multiple Canvass Directors to oversee a single office. With two directors, one could be assigned closing and the other directing with a small amount of overlap between the two. In this manner, the office

would have consistent directing support and directors would have the opportunity to work few hours.

Canvass staff also reported that they had concerns about canvassing.

Overwhelmingly, canvass staff indicated that canvassing takes a huge toll on their mind and bodies. While canvassing is inherently a part of the job, there are steps canvass organizations can take to minimize these effects. Given this, recommendations are made here to decrease the amount of time canvassed for canvassers. One way to do this is by reallocating time canvassed into other tasks. My first proposition is to cut an hour from the canvass day. Cutting an hour would still allow canvass organizations to meet their contractual requirements to the organizations they work for, but decreases the potential for canvassing's impact on the canvasser. Another way this can be achieved is through reallocating some of the workweeks of canvassers to help support the offices recruitment priorities. For example, a canvasser might work three days in the field canvassing and two days in the office recruiting. Either or both of the propositions would decrease canvass time without huge detriments to the organizations canvassers serve while promoting the well-being of canvass staff.

My findings also suggest that canvassers are dissatisfied with their pay. While it is hard to increase pay for canvass staff, one proposition is to offer further incentive opportunities. One way to achieve this is through incentivizing recruitment of new folks to the canvass team. By incentivizing recruitment, the loss the organization would take paying out a canvasser with additional resources would partially be offset by the

canvassers successful fundraising. The additional resources would provide canvassers with an increase in pay.

Canvasser respondents also reported significant concerns about street harassment. While the streets will inherently pose a certain amount of risk for canvass staff, canvass organizations might consider offering training to minimize impacts. One suggestion is to provide de-escalation or other conflict management training to its canvass staff who are in the field. My recommendation is that this training happens as part of a canvasser's orientation to reach the widest possible net of canvass staff. This training would help to ensure canvassers feel empowered to take control over their safety in the field.

Many canvasser respondents reported several strengths of canvass organizations. One strength was the organization's ability to foster relationships. In particular, canvass staff noted strong support from their supervisors and peers. My suggestion would be to keep up socials and encourage relationship building between staff members. Another strength was their ability to offer professional and personal development. I would encourage canvass organizations to continue to look for ways to grow their employees personally and professionally.

While my research indicates that canvass organizations do not burn out canvass staff in the political process, the current research is divided. Given this, one recommendation is to continue researching the effects of canvassing on canvass staff's future engagement. In particular, there is a need for further longitudinal studies that explore canvasser political behaviors post-canvass with expanded ideas about what engagement looks like. There is also a need for these studies to expand across various

canvass organizations. In doing so, we can make generalizations about canvassers and their experiences that go beyond single canvass organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research allowed me to explore the narratives of canvass staff. Many narratives emphasized the importance of canvassing to make a difference while recognizing the canvass offices strengths and limitations in provisions for canvass staff. I was able to identify key themes that suggested places to improve the experiences of canvass staff. It is my recommendation that canvass organizations continue and improve these practice. It is also my recommendation that more research is needed on canvassing. Further research should include longitudinal studies across multiple canvassing organizations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

Understanding the Canvasser

1. How old are you?

I am: _____

2. How do you identify your gender?

- Male
- Female
- My gender is not identified above.

I identify as: _____

3. What is your Race/Ethnicity? (Please check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Latino/Latina or Hispanic
- Pacific Islander
- White
- My race or ethnicity is not identified above:
- I identify as: _____

4. What is the highest level of education you've achieved:

- I did not graduate High school/obtain GED
- High school Diploma/ GED

- Some college
- Associate's Degree/Technical Degree/Certifications
- Bachelor's Degree
- Some Post Baccalaureate Work
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree/ Doctorate of Law/ Doctorate of Jurisprudence

Understanding Canvass Experience

1. In 2-3 sentences, tell me what your motivation was to become a canvasser:
2. Are you currently employed as a canvasser?
 - Yes
 - No
3. If you're not currently employed as a canvasser, how long has it been since you were (estimate in years and months)
 1. Have you ever quit a canvass job? Why?
 2. Please write in the name of the canvass organizations you have worked for and the time you spent with each of them below (estimate in years and months):
 3. Total all of your time spent canvassing, across all organizations and titles and provide an estimate below of the time you've spent as a canvasser (estimate in years or months):
 4. Which issues have you canvassed on behalf of? (check all that apply):
 - Animal Rights & Advocacy
 - Education Reform
 - Environmental Justice

- Homelessness/Poverty Issues
- Humanitarian Relief Aid
- Indigenous People's Rights
- Immigration Reform
- LGBTQ Rights
- Prison Reform
- Racial Equality
- Presidential Election
- Women's Rights
- The issue I campaigned for is not listed:

I campaigned for: _____

5. What states have you canvassed in? (List all states you've canvassed in)

I canvassed in: _____

6. Explain below why you got involved with canvassing

I started canvassing because: _____

7. What was the title of your first canvass position?

My first title was: _____

8. What is the title of the highest position you held within a canvass operation?

My highest title was: _____

9. What is your current/most recent title in your canvass position?

My title is/was: _____

10. Estimate total hours per week you work on average in your most recent canvass position?

I worked: _____

11. Estimate your earning wages per week in your most recent canvass position.

I earned: _____

12. Estimate the number of days per a week you canvassed a full shift in your most recent position as a canvasser:

I canvass for (days in a week): _____

Using the table below, please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your experience with your current or most recent canvass organization:

In my current/most recent position....	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I was adequately trained before being sent out in the field					
I am knowledgeable and informed when canvassing					
I am safe from harassment and physical harm when canvassing					

Using the table below, please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your hours and wages at your current or most recent canvass position:

In my current/most recent position....	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I'm adequately compensated in wages for my work					
I have an appropriate work to life balance					
Canvassing takes a huge toll on my body and mind					

Using the table below, please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your experiences with your immediate supervisor at your current or most recent canvass position:

In my current/most recent position....	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
I am offered adequate professional development						
I am offered adequate personal development						
Management listened when I voiced concerns						

Using the table below, please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your experiences with your canvass team at your current or most recent canvass position:

In my current/most recent position....	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I attended canvass socials					
Outside of work organized activities, I socialized with members of the canvass team					
I consider members of my canvass team my friends					

Using the table below, please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your attitudes about canvassing:

I believe...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
While canvassing, I make a difference					
I am an activist					
Canvassing is a form of activism					

Understanding Personal Civic and Social Engagement - Current

1. Estimate how much money have you given to a national or local nonprofits, advocacy groups, associations, presidential candidates, or political action committees in the last 12 months (round to nearest dollar)?

I have given: _____

2. Estimate the number of social events you've attended that were put on by a national or local nonprofits, advocacy groups, associations, presidential candidates, or political action committees in the last 12 months.

I have attended: _____

3. Estimate the number of rallies, marches, or protests you've attended in the last 12 months:

I have attended: _____

4. I utilize social media to share political news with colleagues and friends:

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Understanding Personal Political Engagement – Current

1. Are you registered to vote?

- Yes.
- No.

2. Did you vote in the last national election?

- Yes.
- No.

3. Did you vote in the last local election?

- Yes.
- No.

Using the table below, please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your attitudes toward your political and social engagement in the next 12 months:

In the next 12 months...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am likely to engage in community service					
I am likely to donate money to a cause or candidate					
I am likely to attend a social event organized by a cause or candidate					
I am likely to participate in a rally, march, or protest for a cause or candidate					
I am likely to vote					
I am likely to spread political news through the use of social media					

Please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statements about your attitudes toward future canvass involvement:

Canvass – Future	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I would take a fundraising position as a canvasser in the future					
I would take a non-fundraising canvassing position in the future					

Future Canvassing

1. Would you canvass again? Please explain why or why not?
2. Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up telephone interview with me about this subject at a later date? If so, please provide your phone number with area code below:

Appendix B: Letter of Consent

A Letter to a Fellow Canvasser,

This study seeks to understand canvassers, their experiences canvassing, and how those experiences impact their lives. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop at any time. There are no known risks to your participation and there are no monetary benefits. However, the results of this research may offer insight into understanding why canvassers do what they do, how the experience changes them, and how that change might affect future political engagement.

This survey should take you about 15 minutes to complete. All of your answers to these questions are completely confidential. All of your identifying information will not be connected to your answers. Data collected from this survey will be retained for three years on a password-protected computer, after which point the data will be destroyed.

This survey will be completed online using Survey Monkey software. Features of the software allowing for the recording of IP addresses and e-mails will be disabled, providing anonymity. Additionally, any identifying information you provide will be confidential and pseudo names will be assigned to participants and canvass organizations.

If you have any questions about this survey, please don't hesitate to reach me (Alex) via e-mail at Alicia.Underwood@humboldt.edu or by phone at 916 968 5480. You may also feel free to contact my advisor and chair, Dr. Mary Virnoche and her email address is Mary.Virnoche@humboldt.edu and her phone number is 707 826 4659.

If you have any concerns about this survey, contact Dr. Ethan Gahtan who is the chair of the Institutional Review Board and his email address is Ethan.Gahtan@humboldt.edu and his phone number is 707 826 4545.

If you have any concerns related to your rights as a participant of this study, contact Dr. Rhea Williamson and her email address is Rhea.Williamson@humboldt.edu and her phone number is 707 826 5169.

Thank you,

Alex

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, please select "next" and you'll be directed to the first question. Please print this informed consent page now and retain it for your records.

Appendix C: Invitation Letter 1

Dear _____,

I am writing to you for some help with a research study that I'm conducting. I am working on my graduate degree at Humboldt State University, in Sociology. My master's work seeks to explore how canvassing impacts a canvasser's community, political, and social lives. My interest in this topic stems from my own experiences as a canvasser coupled with both my academic experience and passion for social movements. I see social movements as a place to create change. I hope that my study will provide insight to canvass organizations and the broader social movements.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this study. I also encourage you to share this post on your Facebook page or in private messages with folks you canvassed with.

Thank you in advance,

Alex

Appendix D: Invitation Letter 2

Dear Fellow Canvasser,

I am writing to you for some help with a research study that I'm conducting. I am working on my graduate degree at Humboldt State University, in Sociology. My master's work seeks to explore how canvassing impacts a canvasser's community, political, and social lives. My interest in this topic stems from my own experiences as a canvasser coupled with both my academic experience and passion for social movements. I see social movements as a place to create change. I hope that my study will provide insight to canvass organizations and the broader social movements.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this study. I also encourage you to share this post on your Facebook page or in private messages with folks you've canvassed with.

Thank you in advance,

Alex