

**APPROACHING CHANGE AND CONFLICT IN U.S. COMMUNITIES: A  
PEACEBUILDING MODEL OF ADVOCACY**

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## ABSTRACT

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Advocacy - the process by which community groups and nonprofit organizations seek to influence the decisions of policymakers – is one of the more nebulous and under-utilized tools available to the citizen sector. Nonprofits have an important role to play in shaping the institutions and structures of their communities. Active nonprofit participation in the local policy process can promote the inclusion of underrepresented views and create collaborative venues for addressing conflicts of interest over policy within communities.

The political arena allows actors with varying goals and interests come together to make decisions about the futures of their communities. However, nonprofit and community organizations are often underrepresented voices in this process. The discipline of peace studies provides a strong theoretical framework for determining how citizen sector organizations can better pursue their policy agendas.

In this thesis, I use the theory of conflict transformation and peacebuilding to develop a framework for how citizen sector organizations, particularly direct-service community organizations can best achieve their policy goals. I then apply this framework to an assessment of advocacy work done by the nonprofit organization, LIFT-DC. The organization has much to gain through greater participation in the political process, but must reevaluate its goals and structure in order to advocate effectively using a peace studies framework. The objective is to develop a vision of a genuinely collaborative relationship between LIFT-DC and other policy stakeholders where all parties can actively express their goals and values in the political arena.

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## INTRODUCTION

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On August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009, citizens of the city of Dallas gathered together for an annual Arts Advocacy Day (Conley 2009). In Vermont, the theme of the 2009 Conference for the Vermont Library Association was “Speaking Up: Advocacy for Libraries” (Vermont Library Association 2008). Representatives from various Maryland domestic violence prevention organizations gathered on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to participate in a conference on how to incorporate advocacy into their work (Maryland Network against Domestic Violence 2009). Scholars of the nonprofit sector refer to an “advocacy explosion” in the decades since the 1960s (Andrews & Edwards 2004: 479, Fiorina 1999: 407) and practitioners such as Kirsten Lodal, the president and CEO of a nonprofit organization called LIFT, talk about how the sector is entering a “new era” where a “new breed of organization” brings together service and activism in political affairs (Lodal 2010). There seems to be a growing sense that striving to make a change in the structure of society through participation in the policy process is, in fact, an essential part of what nonprofit organizations are supposed to be doing.

Advocacy is generally thought of as a kind of lobbying conducted by nonprofits, charitable organizations, community development associations, and similar entities - a collection of organizations I refer to as “citizen sector organizations” or CSOs (see Chapter 1, “Who advocates?” for an explanation of this terminology). Advocacy consists of an effort to bring issues of interest to the advocating CSO to the attention of policymakers, legislators, and others with the ability to affect change. J. Craig Jenkins (2006: 297) has defined advocacy as “any attempt to influence the decision of an institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest,” a definition that is generally consistent with definitions used in both academic and practitioner writings about the subject (Andrews & Edwards 2004: 485; Bass, Arons, Guinane, Carter &

Rees 2007: 12; Berry 1977: 7). While, as Jenkins' definition specifies, advocacy can technically be targeted at anyone with the power to create institutional change, more often than not this target is policymakers as they often have the most consistent and direct ability to alter a community's institutions.

We see advocacy everywhere in society, even if we do not recognize it. Our theaters, arts societies, and libraries advocate for more government funding for the arts. PTAs advocate for better teachers and curricula in public schools. Domestic violence prevention groups advocate for stricter legislation to punish abusers and/or funding for better transitional support for women who have been abused. Organizations that provide food and shelter to homeless people advocate for a stronger social safety net and expanded public benefits. Advocacy is a way of bringing the voices of underserved populations represented by the "citizen sector" (the nonprofit/philanthropic/voluntary sector) into the policymaking process and a way of changing the structures that left these populations underserved and underrepresented in the first place. Ultimately this is done in order to advance the interests of the constituency that the CSO was created to serve, whether that be youth, the elderly, entrepreneurs, women, schools, local business, those without food and shelter or simply society in general. CSOs represent issues and views that might not otherwise gain attention from legislators in order to push for changes in legislation that might not otherwise occur.

### *The Issue*

For something that seems intuitively positive, however, advocacy by CSOs is remarkably plagued by challenges. Despite several centuries of active citizen sector involvement in policymaking in the United States, well-designed social programs lack critical support, pollution and environmental destruction continue to grow rapidly, the welfare state is perceived as

inefficient and ineffective, and poverty remains entrenched. Advocacy activities are typically underfunded by foundations and philanthropists, and lobbying and advocacy restrictions placed on 501(c)(3) organizations (nonprofit charities) through the U.S. tax code pose a significant structural barrier (Berry and Arons 2003: 4). CSOs themselves struggle to prioritize advocacy ahead of their service-related goals, and advocacy is something that can be, and arguably should be, expanded (Bass et al. 2007: 163; Bryce 2005: 14; Lodal 2010).<sup>1</sup> Even when organizations do advocate, the question of whether a certain change being advocated for lies in the public interest is always a matter of contention, and changes advocated by one CSO may be opposed by other members of society for a variety of legitimate reasons. It is dangerous to assume that the goal of advocates is desirable simply because they claim to be working for the general good (Mansbridge 1998: 4). Debates can, and often do, arise between advocates and institutional elites or among advocates focused on different issues over how best to act in the best interests of society.

The political arena provides a home for these debates, as actors with varying goals, interests, and perceptions of the public interest come together to make decisions about the futures of their communities. As one mechanism for political participation, advocacy can potentially promote collaboration, dialogue, innovation, and support among community members. However, it can also promote extremism, fail to represent the goals of its constituents faithfully, or lead to the exclusion or marginalization of opposition groups. Take, for example, citizen associations like the Ku Klux Klan, which have participated quite actively in the political process in U.S. history, believing they were acting in the best interests of society despite the numerous injustices

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<sup>1</sup> The question of motivation and prioritizing advocacy is central to promoting advocacy among nonprofit organizations and other citizen groups. This is a question that I consider to be critically important, but it is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis. Those interested in promoting the expansion of advocacy should see, to start with, Bass et al 2007, OMB Watch and Tuft University's Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP), and research and publications of the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLIPi).

they perpetrated. Excluding extreme examples, conventional wisdom associates CSO advocacy with processes of cooperation and inclusion because of its allegiance to a collective good and its emotional ties to altruism and service. In my experience, this is often the case, but the emotional and moral appeals of CSOs do not lead directly to advocacy for cooperative and supportive social structures and it is helpful to critically explore this process in more depth.

Many perceive advocacy to be a tool for CSOs to combat power structures or to struggle against entrenched elites or institutions that exclude them, their issues, or their constituents from the political process, a more combative model of advocacy (Anheier & Salamon 2006: 91). This struggle can take on a very contentious nature at times, as groups grow frustrated with the balance of power or the actions of opposing organizations. An acquaintance of mine, when asked what advocacy meant, replied simply, “fighting,” and Steinberg and Powell (2006: 1) explain that this perception can lead to social mistrust of advocacy by CSOs. People “fear that some nonprofits will divide us into warring factions...or that the wrong side will win the advocacy wars.” How does this combative, conflictual model of advocacy relate to the cooperative and inclusive one we also imagine? Are the two reconcilable and how does each process relate to the larger challenge of promoting the public interest?

### *Research Question and Scope*

The discipline of justice and peace studies seeks, among other things, to identify tools for responding to conflict in relationships and structures while also promoting inclusive, progressive, constructive, and nonviolent change processes on an institutional level. It does not propose a clear vision of the public interest; rather, it supports processes in which individuals can nonviolently determine their collective interests amongst themselves. As such, the tools of justice and peace studies, in particular, the process of peacebuilding, can help to build an

understanding of advocacy that is focused on these long-term change processes and can accommodate both conflict and cooperation in relationships between actors. This thesis seeks to explore this question: how can direct service CSOs form a strategy to advocate around local policy questions in order to achieve their underlying goals while also establishing processes for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in their societies?

Since this is a broad question and advocacy, the citizen sector, and peacebuilding are nebulous and contested concepts, I limit the scope of my inquiry to organizations working to influence institutions at the *local community* level within the *United States*. The U.S. citizen sector is active and well-developed, has clearly defined mechanisms for advocacy, and has been researched extensively, providing a rich network of data and information. On the local level, the political actors are easier to observe and more diverse, displaying varying objectives and levels of professionalism. It is my hope that insights that are applicable to this group also offer information about other actors and situations in the field of advocacy.

Within the scope of organizations conducting local advocacy in the United States, I will focus particularly on those providing *definable human services directly to a community*. Practitioners typically refer to these as “direct service organizations” or “direct service providers.” The category can include a huge variety of organizations: social service agencies, nonprofit health clinics, after-school programs, etc. Direct service providers can be differentiated from other infrastructure organizations who support expansion of the citizen sector or groups seeking to benefit society as a generalized and intangible whole (such as grantmaking foundations, research institutions, nonprofit sector support organizations, and organizations that advocate for systemic society-wide benefits like transparency in government). Direct service

providers are believed to constitute the majority of all CSOs<sup>2</sup> (Berry and Arons 2003: 5; Wing et al. 2008: 32). These groups also face some of the greatest challenges instituting successful advocacy initiatives because of their reticence to sacrifice resources that could be used for services. As a result, their large scope and unique challenges make them an interesting case in which to examine the role of advocacy.

Finally, I will focus particularly on how these direct-service-providing CSOs seek to influence *policy and policymakers* at the local level in U.S. communities. The broad definition of advocacy maintains that advocacy activities may be directed at “any institutional elite.” However, who constitutes an “institutional elite” may vary from one community to another making it difficult to draw comparisons across organizations and communities. Every town and city in the U.S. has a generally consistent structure of local government, with city-level elected officials and staff. In all cases, that government makes some policy which influences the structure of that community. As a result, policymakers are easily identifiable and consistent targets of the advocacy process. It is best to keep in mind throughout this thesis, though, that the advocacy tactics and techniques I describe in relation to policy and policymakers can just as easily be targeted at non-political actors such as businesses, local socialites or celebrity figures, and quasi-public institutions such as the leadership of school districts or police departments.

### *Why Advocacy?*

#### *i. Importance for CSOs*

Citizen Sector Organizations are founded out of a desire to advance a particular mission – to actively create some change in society. Making sustainable and lasting change in some aspect

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<sup>2</sup> Categorization is subjective and data do not always match up, but estimates of what portion of the sector can be attributed to organizations providing direct, tangible services range from 60% (Berry and Arons 2003, p. 5) to 76% (Wing et al. 2008, p. 32) if one includes education focused organizations fit into the direct service category. The numbers would be slightly smaller if one takes into account that not all education organizations provide direct services, although many do.

of society requires that that change eventually become integrated into systems and institutions so that it might outlast the person or organization who initiated it and thereby reach the broadest possible range of individuals. In a survey of 1,738 CSOs in the U.S. conducted by the Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP), a joint project of OMB Watch, Tufts University, and the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, practitioners who were interviewed repeatedly expressed the viewpoint that “public policy participation” is essential to carrying out this broad long-term social change mission (Bass et al. 2007: 17). CSOs, and the client populations that they serve, are constantly affected by public policy. Both the organization and the community it strives to represent have direct stakes in how policy will develop if for no other reason than that it will deeply affect their ability to work and achieve their organizational goals. Advocacy is an important tool for CSOs seeking to create change on a systemic level and can help dynamic and innovative organizations maximize the impact of the work that they set out to do.

*ii. Societal Importance*

Advocacy by CSOs has the potential to enrich and diversify the social and political debate occurring in U.S. cities and towns and offer new voices and collaborators in the process of building a more effective community. Many individuals who engage in service have a genuine interest in creating diverse, peaceful, and just communities that offer opportunities for their citizens to thrive and flourish. These motives play out through the work of CSOs created by these individuals. CSOs “generate appeals for collective or political action that may be exercised as...a vehicle for the mobilization of disadvantaged or disgruntled constituencies, or as an expression of the diversity of commitments in a pluralist society” (Clemens 2006: 208). Advocates often speak for the interests of populations with very little political clout - individuals

and families who have withdrawn from the political process, perhaps as a result of their marginalization from policy. By doing this, CSOs better inform the political debate, making political elites aware of problems that they might otherwise have overlooked. Most importantly CSOs participating in advocacy can provide support and collaboration for efforts aimed at building strong and effective communities, helping to use resources more effectively and develop new, creative solutions to problems.

*iii. Personal motivation*

Advocacy is also a topic of deep personal interest to me. In 2008, I served on the leadership team of a nonprofit, which was then called National Student Partnerships<sup>3</sup> or NSP-DC. The organization's mission is to help low-income community members expand opportunity by accessing public benefits and community resources. At the beginning of a year-long term as a local student director in the DC office, I was approached by the coordinators of the office. I was told that there had been talk among other members of the office leadership about advocacy. It seemed like it would be consistent with the mission and could be an interesting opportunity to explore. Would I like to take it on as a part of my work plan?

My immediate response was, of course, it sounded like an interesting idea, but what on earth was I supposed to *do*? I soon found that what an advocate does was only the first of a series of questions I had to face as I took on the project. How could the members of our student-staffed nonprofit make themselves heard by policymakers? What tools were available for us to do so? How were we supposed to go about getting started? Would engaging in advocacy burn our student volunteers or distract our attention and resources from serving our clients, which, after all, was the reason we existed in the first place? How could my voice, as a college student with little clout or legitimacy, be taken seriously?

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<sup>3</sup> The organization has since changed its name to LIFT-DC

My very rough understanding of the word advocacy was that it involved trying to change public policy so that it could better meet the needs of people like the low-income clients that our organization served. For a student working only part time and unaccustomed to being involved in local politics, this seemed to be a daunting task. My intuition proved correct. There was no shortage of volunteers interested in participating, but finding ways for all of them to participate in a meaningful and engaging way proved challenging. We knew there was a need for greater involvement, but the amount of time needed to become an expert on city-level political processes and relevant issues seemed overwhelming given our prior commitments to client service.

While my advocacy committee and initiative still exists (I am currently co-director with another student advocate), its future is tentative at best as we try to balance our passion for involvement with its practical demands on our time. Much of the inspiration for this thesis comes from my desire to explore the reasons why organizations like mine engage in advocacy, to find a sustainable niche for my committee and to better understand what is needed to create opportunities for all individuals, youth, adults, students, and professionals alike, to participate in the decision-making process occurring at the local government level in cities across the country.

### *Findings*

Advocacy is an incredibly varied and diverse activity. A wide array of techniques exist for influencing the development of policy and an advocacy initiative can be customized to target any stage of the policy process. As a result of the diversity and flexibility of advocacy as a concept, it becomes important to examine it not as a single activity, but rather as a portfolio of potential activities which can achieve different goals depending on the motivation for their use, the processes through which they are implemented, and how effectively they are conducted.

While there are many potential reasons to conduct advocacy, I argue for the effectiveness of advocacy conducted with the goal of establishing processes for peaceful change. Employing a peacebuilding model of advocacy encourages practitioners to focus on creating long-term proactive institutional change rather than mobilizing in reaction to immediate crisis or conflicts. The process of peacebuilding requires a deep level of engagement in all stages of the policymaking process. It allows stakeholders to understand how conflict and cooperation can coexist in pursuit of a synergistic outcome with wide social benefits. The cultivation of strong, inclusive institutions for participation over time creates avenues and forums for addressing conflicts of interest without having to mobilize huge amounts of resources to garner attention. The cooperative networks that arise as a result of this can help society tackle broad challenges collaboratively and effectively.

### *Roadmap*

Chapter 1, “What is advocacy?” closely investigates the definition of advocacy and explains many of the key facets of its contemporary use by Citizen Sector Organizations. The chapter contains an in-depth explanation of the term “citizen sector” and the incentives and structures of the actions of CSOs. From there, the chapter goes on to highlight key advocacy strategies, illustrating how they might be conceptualized in order to offer opportunities to influence all facets of the policymaking process. Finally, the chapter concludes with a detailed analysis of the challenges and benefits of engaging in advocacy work, both for CSOs and for society in general, highlighting reasons why advocacy is not utilized to the extent that it could be to address the conflicts and frustrations of service-provider CSOs in local U.S. communities.

From here, the thesis moves on to a broader overview of the peacebuilding process, focusing on the characteristics required for peaceful change and conflict transformation. Chapter

2, “What are peacebuilding and conflict transformation?,” begins by offering a conception of positive peace as a process of social change aimed at creating institutions for addressing conflict and building opportunities for collaborative, mutually supportive growth among various members of the community. This is followed by a description of peacebuilding, the process for approaching conflicts of interests as they develop, such as the attitudes, opinions, viewpoints, or identities that may cause CSOs to seek policy change through advocacy.

Chapter 3, “Participating in social change: A Peacebuilding Model of CSO advocacy” begins with an extended example of how the theory of peacebuilding can be employed to analyze a particular hypothetical advocacy effort. It goes on to expand on this analysis with a discussion on some of the characteristics of peaceful change and peacebuilding. It concludes with a basic model of how organizations can restructure their advocacy activities to include a better focus on long-term peaceful change.

Finally, Chapter 4 contains a case study of one particular CSO, LIFT, providing direct services to a local community that is affected by and concerned with changes in local policy. LIFT engages in limited advocacy and is struggling to build its program but faces significant barriers. The peacebuilding model of advocacy described in Chapter 3 is proposed as a potential framework for transforming elements of the organization so that it may more effectively participate in advocacy in the future.

The thesis concludes with some closing remarks about the need for a peacebuilding model of advocacy. It offers a few brief areas in which the research showcased here might be extended, with the hope that advocacy and academic thought on the subject of advocacy continue to grow vigorously in the coming years.

## CHAPTER 1

### WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

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Advocacy is an activity directed at promoting social, cultural, political or economic changes at the institutional level (Andrews & Edwards 2004: 485). It is a way for groups and organizations outside of the political system to play a role and contribute their opinions. An advocating organization seeks to influence the decisions of policymakers and/or actively assist in the construction of policy, in a similar way that a lobbyist would. Advocacy, however, is not exactly the same as lobbying. The activities of advocates are directed at benefiting some broader public or collective interest, rather than the exclusive interests of the lobbyist or funder. This allegiance to a “public good” means that advocacy work is often taken up by groups in the Citizen Sector: nonprofits, foundations, community associations, and similar organizations aimed at promoting social justice and public welfare. There are a wide variety of tools, tactics, and mechanisms that these Citizen Sector Organizations can use to become active participants in the policymaking process and several different avenues through which they can seek to create desired changes. No two advocacy initiatives look alike and understanding what constitutes advocacy requires a full understanding of the actors, goals, mechanisms, and potential outcomes of advocacy work.

#### *A Closer Look at the Definition*

As mentioned in the introduction, the word advocacy can be used to describe “any attempt to influence the decision of any institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest” (Jenkins 2006: 297). We can gain more insight into this definition by examining it in three parts. The first four words provide a conceptual platform for the rest of our analysis. Framing advocacy as “an attempt to influence” demonstrates that advocacy is active and deliberate; it does not

happen accidentally. It also need not be successful. Advocacy consists of the process of attempting to influence institutions, not the actual results and outcomes produced by this attempt. Groups who advocate willingly choose to engage in the process and experience varying degrees of success and failure as they engage in the process.

The second piece of the definition states that advocacy seeks “to influence the decision of any institutional elite.” Advocacy initiatives target a wide range of individuals and groups, ranging from entrenched business interests to wealthy socialites to politicians. As mentioned in the introduction, for simplicity’s sake this thesis will focus on how advocacy affects those making public policy at the local level: typically city council members, neighborhood commissions, a mayor or city manager, other elected officials in city government, and the staff members of any one of these. Such political elites hold the ultimate authority in the creation and passing of legislation and so advocate participation will always be one of influence and not direct control of the policymaking process. Advocates seek to “influence” policymakers in a variety of different ways. Kenneth Andrews and Bob Edwards (2004: 493) list five dominant avenues in which advocates can have an impact: setting agendas, inclusion in decision-making arenas, achieving favorable policies, monitoring and shaping implementation of policy, and shifting the long-term priorities and resources of political institutions. A CSO may approach each of these activities using a wide variety of tactics, and as a result advocacy activities are highly diverse.

The final piece of the definition specifies that those who advocate do so “on behalf of a collective interest.” Collective interest is a slightly ambiguous term, but it can be assumed that it indicates an attempt to benefit some interest greater than that of the original actor. Steinberg and Powell (2006: 1) in their introduction to *The Nonprofit Sector: a Research Handbook* emphasize that nonprofit (CSO) activity, unlike business activity, is not restricted to work that directly

benefits “those who control the use of organizational assets.” Rather, CSOs may work towards a broader social good, and their advocacy may reflect this desire. This indicates that those doing the advocating for a CSO are typically not the sole intended ultimate beneficiaries of their actions. Instead, they advocate for the benefit of some collective outside of themselves - a membership base, a client base, a community, the public in general, or some other grouping of individuals.

### *Who Advocates?*

Any individual or organization may advocate, but the nature of the activity lends itself to what I refer to in this thesis as Citizen Sector Organizations. Since, by definition, one advocates “on behalf of a collective interest,” advocacy becomes a natural tool for entities with the fundamental goal of promoting and maximizing that collective interest. CSOs are generally assumed to work for community or public benefit, although what this benefit consists of is often poorly defined. To investigate this further, I examine the organizational structure of CSOs, their underlying motives, and the activities they undertake in pursuit of this collective interest.

#### *i. Why Not the Nonprofit Sector?*

Terminology and definitional boundaries are complicated and contested so I will briefly go over my choice in language and its implications. The organizations I refer to have been called a variety of names: civil society organizations, third sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, and entities of the commons. However, most commonly they are known as “nonprofits,” which collectively compose the “nonprofit sector.” In almost all cases, these titles could be substituted for my use of “CSO” and “citizen sector” throughout this thesis without much confusion. The idea of “nonprofit” can be helpful in some ways; first and foremost, it serves to accurately distinguish the field from the for-profit business sector, which distributes its

financial surplus (profits) to the owners and shareholders and attempts to maximize financial gain. Businesses and firms are ultimately bound by this fiduciary responsibility, the “bottom line” of maximizing their financial surpluses for the benefit of owners and shareholders. The word “nonprofit,” on the other hand, is used to indicate that such organizations are not bound by this constraint. A nonprofit organization can - and often does - turn a profit<sup>4</sup>, but excess revenues are not required to be given as financial gains to owners/shareholders. Instead they must be used to further fund and expand the programs, investments, and activities the nonprofit is engaged in. In this regard, “nonprofit” provides an accurate picture of the financial structure of organizations like this. However, beyond stipulating how organizations utilize resources, the term offers limited insight into what kinds of activities they actually engage in.

Using the word “nonprofit” forces us to define the sector and its participants in the negative, using as the defining factor the restrictions that exist on the organization’s resource allocation. A positive definition, which speaks to what the organizations in question do rather than what they do not do, offers more insight into the exact nature of the sector and its organizations. A variety of terms have been proposed to replace “nonprofit sector” with a label leading to a positive definition, including the “third sector,” the “independent sector,” the “voluntary sector,” the “prosocial sector,” the “philanthropic sector,” the “citizen sector,” “civil society,” and “the commons” (Lohmann 1992: 309), among others. Each term carries with it an inherent set of assumptions about what the fundamental positive characteristic of the sector might be.

*ii. The Citizen Sector- A Positive Definition of the Sector*

For the purposes of this thesis, I choose to use the phrase “citizen sector” to describe the collection of groups and organizations I am examining. Accordingly, each individual

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<sup>4</sup> Collect revenues in excess of costs

organization or entity within the sector will be referred to throughout the thesis as a “Citizen Sector Organization,” abbreviated CSO. The phrase “citizen sector” is used by William Drayton, the founder and CEO of the CSO Ashoka: Innovators for the Public (Ashoka). Because the word comes from within the sector itself and not out of an academic tradition, I believe it has the potential to reflect something unique about the nature of the work of these organizations without being overburdened by the cross-disciplinary academic disputes that gave rise to the terminology dilemma in the first place (Lohmann, 1992: 309).

The reasoning behind the phrase “citizen sector” is that “citizens—people who care and take action to serve others and cause needed change—are the essence of the sector... when one or several people get together to cause positive social change, they... become citizens in the fullest sense of the word” (Ashoka: Innovators for the Public)<sup>5</sup>. This offers both a positive and active vision of the sector’s fundamental characteristic, and gives insight into the nature of its objectives, and its activities. In particular several elements of Ashoka’s description stand out. First, the phrase “serve others and cause needed change” is consistent with the collective interest stipulation of the nonprofit definition, the idea that those controlling the sector are ultimately bound to disperse the benefits of their work to others beyond themselves. The description highlights people who “get together to cause positive social change” emphasizing the centrality of collaboration and the process of actively creating change. Use of the word “citizen” also implicitly endorses the idea that participation in the citizen sector is a part of a healthy public life and community functioning.

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<sup>5</sup> The use of the word “citizen” is not meant to discriminate against those who are noncitizens in a political/legal sense or have historically been excluded from formal citizenship. Citizen is used in the broadest possible conceptualization of the term as one who belongs to a community and works to improve it.

*Citizen Sector Advocacy*

Given this illustration of the citizen sector, why might CSOs be uniquely suited to engage in advocacy? If we return to the definition of advocacy as an attempt to “influence the decision” of elites, this indicates a desire by advocates to alter the outcome of the decision from what it would have been had they not been involved; in other words, to create a change or to influence the way institutional change occurs. Andrews and Edwards (2004: 481) are more explicit about connecting advocacy and change, explaining in their definition that advocates “make public interest claims either promoting or resisting social change.” Fundamentally, the goal of advocates is to be a part of the social change process, in part by supporting and opposing particular policies. CSOs, according to the Ashoka description, are also founded by individuals or groups of individuals desiring to create some *change in society*. Each CSO expresses this through their mission and vision statements, which describe what change the CSO was designed to make in the world and the kind of society the CSO would like to see exist if it could be successful in doing so. CSOs by definition are committed to altering some aspect of society in a way they perceive as positive, and advocacy is a tool that would allow an organization to begin to do so on a systemic level.

Advocacy is also deeply connected to the work of the Citizen Sector through its underlying connection to inclusion and the sharing of ideas, perspectives and skills. The Ashoka definition describes the sector as one in which people “get together” to create change. This *coming together* of individuals committed to change creates opportunities for collaboration, inclusive decision-making, and for a desire to be a part of a more integrated community. Each of these objectives leads naturally to the pursuit of advocacy through dialogue, participation, and cooperation.

## *Effects of Advocacy on CSOs*

### *i. Potential Benefits*

As highlighted above, the first and most central benefit to CSOs from participating in advocacy stems from their own identities. CSOs have a fundamental interest in creating institutional change that is in line with the mission, vision, and values they identify with and were founded to promote. Even those groups with a direct-service identity, who define their existence through the particular services they provide to the community and not their larger institutional involvement, tend to have some kind of underlying goal that seeks social change. Often this social change goal is encapsulated in their mission and vision statements, which the SNAP project found to be powerful motivators for CSOs of all kinds who engage in advocacy, including direct-service providers (Bass et al. 2007: 39).

In addition to an ideological desire to create change, CSOs can also benefit on a practical level from operating in a policy climate that is favorable to their work. Anne Romatowski, the Manager of Program Design and Evaluation at the nonprofit LIFT, explained that LIFT's clients and services were directly impacted by policy all the time (Romatowski 2010). Policy that is directly hostile to an organization's ability to carry out its work can pose a huge barrier to that organization's program goals and continued survival. As a result, CSOs have a vested interest in promoting policies that allow them to achieve their goals more effectively. It is often easiest for organizations to mobilize in response to threats to their work. Seventy-two percent of respondents in the SNAP research cite protecting programs that serve clients, constituents, or the community where the CSO works from threats as a high motivator of participation (Bass et al. 2007: 40). As a result, advocacy is frequently employed in times of crisis, when a particular

policy or program is perceived as being under attack or when a policy or program challenges a CSO's ability to provide necessary services to the community.

*ii. Potential Challenges*

One of the chief downsides of advocating for a CSO is the threat it poses to its tax exempt status. Organizations classified as 501(c)(3) (public charities, which comprise a large subset of CSOs) are tax-exempt, but in exchange for this status, they are prohibited from certain forms of both political (campaign) participation and legislative (lobbying) actions (Internal Revenue Service 2009). On the political side, public charities are directly prohibited from participating in a political campaign on behalf of a candidate, making contributions to political candidates, and organizing voter registration or education activities that promote a particular candidate, party, or issue. On the legislative side, no "substantial part" of its time or resources may be dedicated to lobbying activities, measured in terms of expenditures and staff time dedicated to the endeavor (Internal Revenue Service 2009). Lobbying can include "contacting or urging the public to contact, members or employees of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or directly calling for the adoption or rejection of legislation" but does not include public awareness or education activities (Internal Revenue Service 2009). CSOs with 501(c)(3) status can engage in activism up to a certain point although it is often difficult to determine where this point lies, and many CSOs are misinformed about what they may and may not do (Bass et al. 2007: 33). This confusion and the perception that these restrictions represent a larger social hostility towards CSO political involvement can lead organizations to advocate at levels far below what is actually permitted by the U.S. tax code.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the challenges for CSOs posed by 501(c)(3) political and legislative restrictions see Berry and Arons (2003)

The most fundamental barrier, however, is a shortage of resources available to dedicate towards advocacy: including time, staff skills, and funding. In the SNAP survey, organizations that responded labeled this as the primary barrier they face (Bass et al 2007: 30). Federal funding, upon which many organizations rely, cannot be allocated to lobbying activities and so CSOs must fundraise for these activities themselves. Grantmaking foundations, however, are hesitant to fund advocacy as well, both due to the perceived chance of government antagonism towards advocacy by CSOs and a prevailing focus on funding activities that produce concrete, measurable, results in a relatively short time period (Bass et al. 2007: 34). Staff turnover is high overall at citizen sector organizations, and CSOs cite a lack of staff expertise, knowledge, and time as considerable challenges when seeking to engage in advocacy (Bass et al. 2007: 37).

While staff and funding shortages are challenges facing all CSOs, they are particularly acute for direct service organizations. The SNAP researchers described finding a “growing divide” between advocacy and service delivery (Bass et al. 2007: 27). Advocacy increasingly belongs to the realm of infrastructure CSOs specializing in policy, research, and lobbying and who do not qualify themselves as 501(c)(3) public charities. Organizations who do not change their tax status, however, and whose identity is tied to human services, feel pressure to put increasingly more resources into service to meet unmet demand for their programs (Bass et al. 2007: 27). LIFT CEO Kirsten Lodal explains the fundamental importance of LIFT’s identity as a service provider, first and foremost. “If we had only one dollar left and had to choose how to allocate that dollar, we would spend it on helping a family today,” she explained - as opposed to investing the dollar in potential, but risky, future gains from advocacy (Lodal 2010). This growing pressure felt by service-provider CSOs, who comprise a majority of all CSOs means that advocacy is perceived as taking time and energy away from meeting key organizational

goals. Many organizations who could participate in policymaking instead choose not to so that they may dedicate themselves to meeting needs for their services.

### *Effects of Advocacy on the Democratic Process*

Through their use of advocacy CSOs are undeniable players in local community politics. Individual voters are not the only entities with the capability to take part in the democratic process. Elisabeth Clemens explains, “incorporated or not, associations are potential sites and resources for political activity” (Clemens 2006: 207). Organizations bring together and mobilize groups of people, but also act with unique goals and interests that are distinct from any one member. The citizen sector has historically played a central role in American politics, from the American Revolution to the conservative revolution of the 1980s (Dobkin Hall 2006: 35). Today, even advocacy that is not connected to broader social movements has become more politically salient “as a result of shifts in the broader policy environment within which the field exists. These shifts have thrust nonprofit sector institutions into unaccustomed prominence near the center of contemporary policy debates” (Anheier & Salamon 2006: 89). There is a persistent observation in academic literature on the subject that CSOs who might not normally participate are beginning to explore advocacy as more actors in government understand the sector and begin taking it seriously. What can we say about how our local democracy is affected by this CSO advocacy?

#### *i. Potential Benefits*

There are several potential channels through which advocacy could benefit the democratic process, the most central of which is that it provides a vehicle for the expression of alternate voices in the policy making process. Peter Dobkin Hall references Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* to explain that while voting in elections is the most direct

form of participation in government, advocacy serves as a means of holding elected officials accountable and expressing minority viewpoints, even between elections. If it weren't for these "intermediary collectivities, the people [have] no way of making their influence felt, save at election time" (Dobkin Hall 2006: 36). Without a direct vote, often the most effective way for individuals to express their view is through the advocacy of organizations that stand for their interests, which can include a variety of political interest groups, as well as CSOs.

CSO participation in the democratic political process can potentially lead to a greater degree of inclusivity and more equitable policy outcomes. One branch of political theory hypothesizes that policy decisions are ultimately likely to align closely with the preferences of the "median voter," the hypothetical voter whose views are exactly in the center of other potential voters (Holcombe 2004: 116). Since a much larger percentage of high-income individuals are registered to vote than low-income individuals,<sup>7</sup> (U.S. Census Bureau: 7) policy is likely to align itself more closely with the interests of a higher income population than if all groups voted equally. Advocacy can help bring the viewpoints of nonvoting low-income populations, or other marginalized groups who are underrepresented as voters, to the attention of policymakers and may help produce more equitable policy results.

This can be achieved by directly lobbying policymakers, and also by influencing public opinion. Carol J. Glynn (Glynn, Herbst, O'Keefe, & Shapiro 1999: 300) observes that changes in public opinion can have a "noticeable" result on policy outcomes, and as a result advocacy by CSOs may shift policy away from the outcome it might have produced otherwise by controlling public opinion on the subject. Susan Herbst observes that often, local and state legislators care about public opinion but do not have access to complete polling data on most of the issues that

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<sup>7</sup> In the 2000 census, of the highest income bracket (annual family income of \$75,000 and up) 82% report being registered to vote, whereas of the lowest income bracket (annual family income of less than \$5000) only 53.5% report being registered to vote. (U.S. Census Bureau: 7)

they consider. As a result, they rely on interest groups, advocates, and media coverage in order to judge public opinion when making decisions, emphasizing that advocates may play an important role in conveying information to policymakers about the needs and views of the community (Andrew & Edwards 2004: 495).

In addition to promoting the inclusion of important viewpoints and information, advocacy can also help CSOs integrate themselves as collaborators in decision-making processes. Greater avenues for collaboration allow the pooling of expertise and resources as well as the expression of diverse viewpoints that permits actors to think creatively about what is possible (Hardy & Phillips 1998: 218). In local politics collaborative work is often a large determinant of the type of policy solutions that are envisioned and pursued. Although policymakers hold ultimate decision-making power in deciding policy outcomes, Andrews and Edwards (2004:495) observe that in politics, “studies of collective decision-making at both local and national levels often find extensive collaborative efforts, suggesting that networks of inter-organizational exchange may be a significant factor shaping the dynamics and outcomes of influence activities.” When CSOs participate in local decision-making through advocacy they generate greater avenues for these collaborations around issues that they care most about. Many of these are issues that typically lack support and don’t generate coalitions willing to work to improve them. As a result, CSOs who champion such issues can raise support and cooperation around implementing new policy decisions.

### *ii. Potential Challenges*

Although advocacy has much to offer the political processes, like any form of interest group participation, it can be “problematic as well as potent.” (Clemens 2006: 207). Fiorina (1999: 410) argues that interest groups of all kinds, including CSOs, tend to elevate extreme

voices and promote the polarization of the political decision-making process. He cites a proliferation of single-issue groups, interested in promoting victory on one particular issue without concern for an overall balanced final outcome (Fiorina 1999: 410). While CSO advocacy is at times assumed to be above this kind of activity, there is no system of accountability to ensure that a CSO's actions are in the best interests of a particular community (Dobkin Hall 2006: 54) or that moderate voices are given appropriate attention in the face of more active extreme participants. Minkoff (1999: 1670) however, cites an opposite danger of organized advocacy, warning that organizations will adopt *less* radical goals for changeover time, bending their missions and activities (including advocacy) to cater to the status quo out of a desire for organizational survival. In this case, the real, more radical desires of the population the CSO represents are not faithfully expressed.

The criticisms of CSO advocacy extend beyond CSO status as a form of interest group and point to additional, specific challenges of advocating for the particular, socially-minded interests CSOs tend to represent. Dobkin Hall (2006:55) stresses that the participation of CSOs in the policy process can create a liberal bias in policymaking, emphasizing that the large majority of CSOs have liberal viewpoints and thus advocacy does not lead to equal ideological representation. Anheier and Salamon (2006: 89) take a different view, arguing that, while liberal in their ideology, CSOs are too conservative in their actions and warning that CSOs “intentionally or unintentionally support the status quo by easing pressures for more basic change” through the small victories that they win through advocacy efforts.

Whether the current professionalized advocacy undertaken by CSOs leads to unnecessary extremism and bias or the compromise of real community needs for change, there are legitimate criticisms surrounding its potential impact on society and the political process. Both the benefits

and challenges of CSO advocacy for society as a whole are important to keep in mind as we seek to explore how advocacy can be conducted with the goal of peacebuilding. CSOs “have moved closer to the center of policy concern” (Anheier & Salamon: 91) and will remain there for good or for ill. What remains is to decide how best to use the wide variety of advocacy activities available in order to achieve an outcome that is most in line with the interests of society as a whole and reflective of the values and characteristics of peacebuilding.

### *The Advocacy Toolkit*

Advocacy is not a single action – it is a strategy composed of many tools that can be used to influence the decisions of governments, legislators, and social elites. A series of key strategies can, however, be identified and a firm understanding of these tactics can be very helpful for an organization looking to dive into advocacy without a strong knowledge of where to begin.

Figure 1 is a preliminary list of activities that could constitute advocacy, which have been divided into the five categories described by Andrews and Edwards (2004: 492). A good strategic approach to challenges requires that the process undertaken is reflective of both the context and the desired end. A peacebuilding model of advocacy, for example, might employ a different variation of tactics than one designed to combat a particular piece of legislation introduced by an opposing actor. Some organizations concentrate on steps directed at specifically influencing a piece of legislation while others focus on a wider array of more subtle tactics. The latter approach, with the goal of promoting good processes and building deep engagement is most in line with a peacebuilding strategy as will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3. For now, however, each advocacy tactic can be evaluated for its own merits as each is helpful in accomplishing particular and distinct objectives when seeking to influence policymakers.

*Figure 1: List of possible advocacy activities<sup>8</sup>*

<p>Setting agendas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal discussions about issues</li> <li>• Encouraging members and other citizens to write, call, or visit their legislators</li> <li>• Public awareness/education campaigns</li> <li>• Speaking informally about issues and programs</li> <li>• Demonstrations, rallies, and vigils</li> <li>• Letters to the editor</li> </ul> <p>Inclusion in decision-making arenas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testifying in legislative or administrative hearings</li> <li>• Participating in town halls and community meetings</li> <li>• Responding to requests for information from those in government</li> <li>• Interacting socially with government officials</li> <li>• Meeting with government officials</li> <li>• Taking part in a government brainstorming, planning, or advisory group</li> </ul> <p>Achieving favorable policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobbying for or against a proposed bill or other policy pronouncement (limited due to tax law)</li> </ul> <p>Monitoring and shaping implementation of policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Producing quality research and scholarship</li> <li>• Participating in a regulatory commission or group</li> </ul> <p>Shifting the long-term priorities and resources of political institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing civic engagement (voter education, voter registration, etc)</li> <li>• Promoting a vision for society that others can support and subscribe to</li> <li>• Developing successful “pilot projects” that can be taken on by governments</li> <li>• Taking part in a coalition that advocates</li> </ul>
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The decision over which issues will be brought to the attention of legislators and the order, length, and manner in which they will be addressed is a product of the official or “formal” agenda crafted by legislators to manage the policy process. While this agenda is ultimately determined by policymakers, it can be influenced by outside actors who can exert pressure or

<sup>8</sup> Figure 1 uses a framework describing five dimensions of the policy process in which advocates participate designed by Andrews and Edwards (2005). The assignment of advocacy activities to various categories is my own and the list of activities selected is compiled from Andrews and Edwards (2005), Bass et al. (2007), Lodal (2010), and Romatowski (2010), and other informal conversations with practitioners I have had over the past several years through my own personal capacity as an advocate.

speaking credibly about why an issue should or should not be considered by the legislative body. Hardy & Phillips (1998: 219) cite “discursive legitimacy,” the ability to determine and frame issues to be addressed by a group decision-making entity, as one of three key elements of how organizations wield power and influence when interacting with one another. If an issue is never brought to the table, it cannot be addressed and the way in which an issue is originally framed has a large impact on the kinds of solutions that can be generated. As a result, control of the formal legislative agenda, either through direct, personal influence on policymakers or through indirect influence of public opinion pressure, can be a powerful tool for CSOs to influence how policymakers make decisions.

Andrews and Edwards (2004: 495) indicate that indirect influence on agendas may be in fact the dimension where CSOs could have the strongest influence, citing their superior ability to shape public opinion through media attention, demonstrations, rallies, and public awareness and education initiatives. CSOs frequently engage in these kinds of activities, and a variety of empirical studies indicate that in the United States at least, public opinion plays a major role in how policymakers establish their legislative priorities, which in turn affects their agendas and eventual policy decisions (Andrews & Edwards 2004: 494). Agenda setting is a proactive approach to advocacy, focused on shaping the direction policy takes rather than reacting to a direction already set by others and as such, advocates can gain an upper hand by pursuing these kinds of activities.

The second category, “inclusion in decision making arenas” is another example of a proactive approach to advocacy. In this step, CSOs seek to acquire more active influence over the shaping of policy itself, rather than simply influencing the kinds of issues that will be considered. CSOs achieve direct formal inclusion when they are invited to participate in

brainstorming, planning, or advisory groups that help write, shape and implement legislation. However they can also achieve indirect inclusion by positioning themselves as a party that is consulted as decisions are made, through participation in hearings and community forums or meetings and consultations with councilmembers, executives, and other policymakers.

“Individuals and organizations require sufficient power to demonstrate that they have a “legitimate” right to participate (Hardy & Phillips 1998: 220), and a CSO’s interests gain considerable political clout if they are considered desirable and knowledgeable representatives of an issue (Andrews & Edwards 2004: 496). This kind of inclusion allows CSOs to actively influence the direction that policy decisions are taking. Inclusion, even on a single issue, can lead to the development of ongoing political relationships through which CSOs can find potential allies for their issues and exchange favors with key players in the local political process.

Andrews and Edwards’ third category, “achieving favorable policies” is the most concrete measure of CSO success in a dimension of influencing public policy, and can be either reactive or proactive. If a particular policy is being considered that a CSO does not approve of, it can react to that policy by seeking to block it. Similarly, if a particular policy is not being considered, CSOs may react by generating emergency support for it. This one-time crisis-provoked style of involvement does not, however, guarantee further involvement on other issues. CSOs can seek to build a particular piece of policy or legislation from scratch, which requires perhaps, a long-term interest in ensuring its success and a more proactive approach.

Building legislative accomplishments is arguably a more permanent and concrete manner of influencing public policymakers than the above two dimensions of advocacy, since a piece of policy is a formally binding outcome that can directly affect community members in a measurable way. Because of this advocating around favorable policies is often the first thing

people think of when they imagine advocacy and advocates are often evaluated by how often they can achieve favorable policies. However, excessive reliance on policy success as a measure of advocacy success, while tempting, can be problematic for a variety of reasons. It is always difficult to say who “caused” an outcome of a vote or policy decision. Simply because a CSO advocated for an issue and a favorable policy resulted does not mean that the CSO’s activity led directly to that outcome. Likewise, and perhaps more importantly, CSOs with no legislative achievements often still have influence on policymakers through activities in the other four categories of the political process described in the table above. More subtle forms of influence may eventually reap greater dividends in the long-term pursuit of their goals. The existence of a favorable policy victory in the short term does not in any way guarantee that the CSO’s long-term goals will be met, although in the long-term, favorable policy outcomes are always a desirable accomplishment.

Advocates may win a legislative victory on an issue but do not always have control over how the legislation is implemented, monitored, or regulated after it is passed. If advocates are able to achieve a particular policy outcome through aggressive strategies which alienate other dominant stakeholders, there is little incentive for these stakeholders to give their full support to the policy after it is enacted. A piece of policy may be underfunded, poorly regulated, not integrated with similar systems or services, or allowed to deteriorate over time. One legislative victory may also be counterbalanced by other future legislative outcomes that make it more challenging for the original legislation to succeed. CSO advocates looking to extend their influence beyond single victories may also seek to gain influence in the “monitoring and shaping the implementation” of already-created policy, seeking to ensure that its implementation is in line with their goals, that related policy decisions do not counterbalance its effectiveness and that

it remains fully supported and funded. The most direct way for CSOs to accomplish this is by participating in a regulatory or advisory commission, but they may also exert outside pressures by providing research and scholarship on the ongoing effects and effectiveness of particular policies and engaging in other similar outside pressure activities focused on the effectiveness of current policy.

The final category, “shifting the long-term priorities and resources of political institutions” is arguably the most powerful, since a shift in priorities and goals of policymakers brings their visions and behaviors closer to the goals of CSO advocates and has an indirect effect on how policymakers themselves will perform activities in each of the other four categories. The public and official agenda are responsive to overarching norms and goals held by policymakers, as are beliefs on who merits inclusion in decision-making arenas. Policymakers whose priorities are more in line with that of a particular advocate are more likely to support policies representative of that advocate’s long-term priorities and ensure proper monitoring and implementation so the desired effect may be achieved. However, shifting long-term priorities is also the most intangible and difficult to accomplish of all the advocacy areas and requires detailed attention to the process of social change, influence, and power in the political arena. In particular, it requires seeing a particular instance in which advocates feel the need to advocate as a part of a much larger framework of relationships where advocates must take their long-term goals into account when making strategic decisions. The following chapter, “What Are Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation?” will offer a model for envisioning this long-term process of change that may be helpful to potential advocates seeking to accomplish constructive change goals that work towards a more equitable, nonviolent, and just society.

*Summary*

Advocacy can be defined as “any attempt to influence the decision of any institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest” as CSOs seek to respond to and create change in social institutions, particularly public policy. Citizen Sector Organizations are uniquely suited to engage in advocacy due to their interest in achieving a collective good and their organizational tendency to collaborate with others to create social change. Advocacy is a complicated endeavor for both society and CSOs and has definite downsides. Its effectiveness and results depend on the manner in which it is used. Advocates can choose to take action on a variety of political levels: setting agendas, participating in decision-making arenas, achieving legislative victories, monitoring and shaping the implementation of policy, and shifting the priorities and resources of policymakers. The ways in which they target each of these priority areas will vary based on CSO goals and priorities and will have an effect on their ability to achieve both immediate and long-term change. Proactive, long-term change may be the most influential of all advocacy focuses because effective processes have indirect effects on how decisions are made in the short-term. As a result, a model of advocacy that is process-focused and engages the deeper context of change over time may be helpful for advocates as they seek to meet their underlying goals.

*Looking forward*

In seeking this long-term change, advocates must face instances of conflict where their views do not align with those of policymakers or other interest groups seeking to influence policy. It is these conflicts of interest that motivate CSOs to advocate. They are brought to the policy arena out of a desire to ensure that policy is not hostile to their goals and values. Through advocacy, CSOs seek to change the direction of policy in favor of what they perceive to be the common good, but any claim regarding what is and what is not in the public's best interest will,

by necessity, be essentially subjective and contested. When conflicts over the decisions policymakers will make arise, CSO advocates can either seek to oppose other actors or cooperate with them. For advocates, it is not always in their best long-term interest to approach conflicts in an adversarial manner, as this may alienate stakeholders and prevent them from gaining legitimacy or inclusion in decision-making arenas. However, it is also not always effective to cooperate on an issue as this may prevent the CSO from pushing other stakeholders to change their behaviors and opinions when real change is needed.

Despite the dangers of short-term cooperation, in the long run, mutual, genuine collaboration, in which the interests of collaborators are fully incorporated or maximized, can be highly effective for achieving a desired social change. It allows stakeholders to share ideas, perspectives, resources, and expertise. As a result, processes are necessary that can manage short-term conflict while continuing to build towards dynamic long-term collaborative, peaceful, and equitable relationships. The study of peacebuilding offers one potential framework for accomplishing just this.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT IS PEACEBUILDING?

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The founder of modern peace research, Johan Galtung, described his field as an applied social science with a positive normative goal: the desire to work for “peace by peaceful means” (Galtung 1996: 9). Since Galtung’s early research, the field of justice and peace studies has adopted a unique set of methods and assumptions, although it continues to draw insight and perspective from its original interdisciplinary ties to other social sciences. Justice and peace studies is inherently an “emancipatory” field of research, meaning that it is goal-oriented and seeks to change social relations and structures to facilitate peaceful and constructive responses to conflict (Patomaki 2001: 726). Conflict is endemic to all aspects of human interactions and as a result, research conducted in justice and peace studies can have implications for a variety of real life challenges, including the manner in which CSOs become involved in the local political process. This chapter explores how advocacy relates to the process of building peace and transforming conflict and the ways in which the peacebuilding framework can help advocates engage in effective, long-term, peaceful advocacy.

#### *Peace and Peaceful Change*

While there is no clear consensus on the definition of “peace,” there is a long tradition of exploring how others conceptualize it. First and foremost, many scholars agree that peace should be regarded as a *process*, not a *state* (Galtung 1996: 32; Lederach 2003: 40; Miall 2007: 67). It is not a static end goal that we seek to reach one day, much less a utopian one that bears little resemblance to the realities of the world. Instead, the concept of peace describes the way in which people relate to one another and go about solving problems in everyday life. The process requires building a particular “quality of relationship” between actors, issues, and organizations

(Lederach 2003: 20) that is characterized by high levels of equity, justice, dialogue, cooperation, solidarity, and integration (Galtung 1996: 32).

“Peace” is a dynamic concept that, when properly understood, can serve as a useful goal and criteria for advocates seeking to achieve social change. By using the word “peace,” I do not refer to the absence of conflict. The concept of peace, as it is understood by the discipline of justice and peace studies, embraces conflict and change as necessary social forces. By nature, human beings will have differing needs and identities, and conflict will always emerge when those do not align. Disagreements and unmet needs are natural and recognizing them allows society to see when a particular change is needed. The existence of a conflict, large or small, compels individuals to stop and assess their needs and concerns alongside those of the other party (Lederach 2003: 18). It provides information about a situation and creates opportunities for groups to adapt their behaviors and attitudes in response.

The discipline of peace studies is not concerned with eliminating conflict, but rather with changing how individuals and organizations react to it. A conflict can drive us to adopt constructive change, but it can also lead to violent or destructive behaviors. The elimination of direct, physical violence comprises one goal of peacebuilding, but destructive responses to conflict can take other forms as well. Galtung (1996: 14) describes the absence of direct violence as “negative peace” and goes on to elaborate a much broader goal of “positive peace,” which also seeks to minimize or eliminate “structural violence” (inequality built into social structures and institutions) and “cultural violence” (the legitimization of violent or unjust actions) (Galtung 1996: 32) when responding to conflict. Most importantly, Galtung’s “positive peace” requires more than a simple response to conflict; it also involves a process of building something new – specifically institutions that allow actors to collaborate towards mutually beneficial and

synergistic goals (Lederach 2003: 22). The aim of generating new processes and structures emphasizes that peacebuilding is an active process, not a passive or responsive one. Peaceful processes and institutions are patterns of action or behavior that enhance the quality of human life and “promote self-realization” (Davies-Vengoechea 2004: p. 16).

From this, we can derive a tentative working definition for “peace.” For the purposes of this thesis, “peace” can be defined as the continuous and constantly evolving *process* of developing institutions, norms, and structures capable of both *responding to conflicts* and *creating new opportunities* for collaborative, mutually beneficial action in order to *promote human well-being* on the individual, interpersonal, structural, and cultural levels. Of course, this process does not emerge from nowhere; peace can be cultivated and encouraged by actors through their attitudes and behavior. Accordingly, “peacebuilding” refers to the actions undertaken by individuals to promote this process of cultivating and building peace.

### *Conflict Transformation*

If we understand peace and peacebuilding in this way, how can we go about addressing conflict and building peace? The subfield of conflict transformation offers a starting point for approaching this challenge. The practice of transforming conflict begins with the premise that conflicts are opportunities that point to areas where social change is needed. The interests and goals of the parties in conflict are legitimate and need not necessarily be compromised to achieve a synergistic outcome. Conflict transformation seeks to literally “change the shape” of these conflicts so that actors’ goals are no longer incompatible, opportunities for genuine collaboration arise, and social structures can respond through innovation (Lederach 2003: 30). This transformation begins with a reevaluation of the options available for responding to a conflict

once it arises and an understanding of how this reaction will affect the larger process of change over time.

John Paul Lederach (2003: 31), a leading practitioner in the field of conflict transformation, suggests that we learn to see conflicts in terms of their “episodes” (visible incidence or one-time expression of a conflict) and their “epicenter” (the underlying incompatibility that gives rise to conflicts of interest). Episodes of conflict – dilemmas, frustrations, disputes, battles, and even wars – all stem from underlying, historical, cultural, and identity-based issues that play out over an extended period of time and comprise the epicenter of the conflict. This epicenter may give birth to various subsequent episodes of conflict. For example, a public debate over school vouchers in a particular city may be followed by a conflict over the use of metal detectors in public schools. Both are undeniably separate episodes of conflict, but both derive from an underlying difference in views over the appropriate role of the community in children’s education.

The manner in which parties in conflict align themselves and define their goals is often derived from the particular episode of conflict rather than the underlying issues that brought them into conflict in the first place. In resolving a particular episode of conflict without addressing the underlying issues at stake, parties run the risk that the same conflict will only emerge later in a different form and be similarly misunderstood. On the other hand, recognizing the deeper context of values and identities that bring conflicts to light can help parties better understand why the conflict has developed and how each course of action will affect their future trajectory. Although they will likely still find themselves in future conflicts, they will have developed understandings and frameworks for approaching that conflict once it does. When the nature of the conflict is better understood, actors can create a “change in the goals, structure,

parties, or context of the conflict, which removes or changes the contradiction or incompatibility at its heart” (Miall 2007: 14). This *transformation* of the context that generated the episode of conflict is intended to allow parties to critically examine the kinds of social change that the conflict might call for and move towards building peaceful relationships and institutions.

### *A Theoretical Approach to Peacebuilding*

Miall (2007: 81) gives a theoretical overview of how this process might ideally take place:

#### *Figure 2: Miall’s Peacebuilding Process*

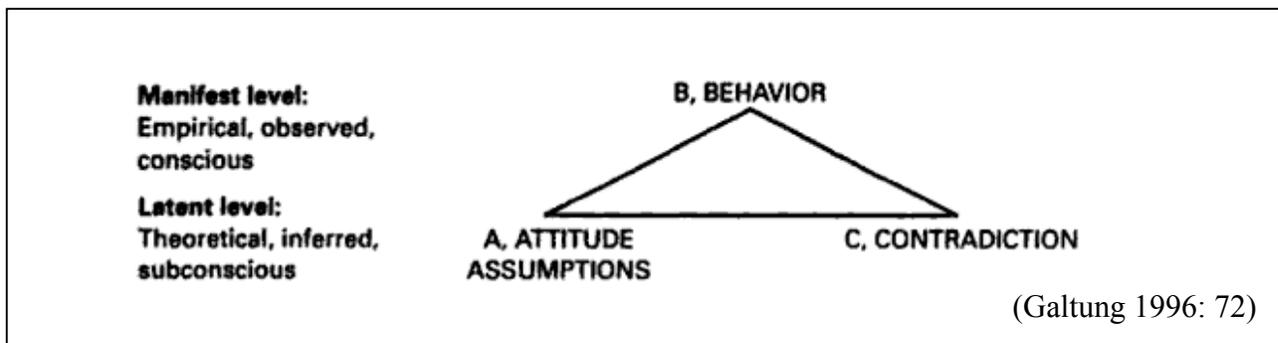
1. Parties altering their behavior...or their position with respect to the issues in conflict
2. Parties altering their goals, or shifting their priorities between goals.
3. Parties Coordinating their behavior
4. Parties adopting joint goals
5. Parties altering themselves, for example by splitting or integrating, or through change in their constituencies or composition
6. Parties altering their identities
7. Parties transforming their relationships

(Miall 2007: 81)

Each of the above steps does not lead directly or automatically to the next. Actors may progress and regress, skip steps, or remain at a certain point in the process for long periods of time. Achieving one part of the process does not guarantee that the next automatically follows without effort. Just because an actor has identified a joint goal with another actor, does not mean the actor will change itself, its identity, or its relationships with others. This kind of change is not always needed or perceived as needed by the actors involved based on their identities, goals, and values. However, when transformation is necessary – when conflict between groups creates physical, structural, or cultural violence that impedes the well-being of one or both groups - conflict transformation theory maintains that the opportunity for this change exists if the parties to conflict desire and work to create it.

The first step is a necessary and logical starting point. After gaining an understanding of the contradiction at the heart of the conflict, actors respond first by changing their attitudes and behaviors. Galtung also emphasizes this point, identifying the three main pathways for approaching a conflict as attitude, behavior, and the contradiction at the heart of the issue (1996: 72). Armed with an understanding of the deep context of a disagreement, an actor may choose to act differently towards another stakeholder out of respect for his or her values or reframe his or her approach to the issue in order to achieve potentially more productive results.

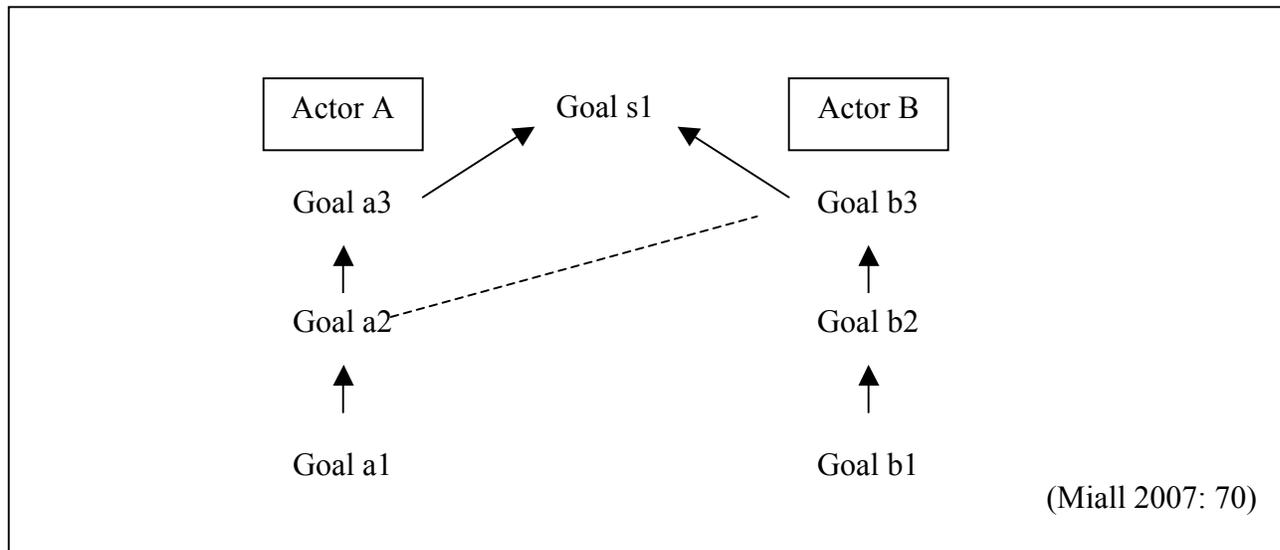
*Figure 3: Galtung's Conflict Triangle*



The second step involves transforming the inconsistency or contradiction at the heart of the conflict so that parties' goals are no longer strictly incompatible. Conflicts of interests develop when actors hold such incompatible objectives. However, our goals and the priorities we weight them with are not constant; they can change and shift in response to circumstances. Miall (2007:80) cites the metaphor of a hand of cards. We hold a set of goals but are presented with new options and may chose to keep or discard goals at any time, constantly remaking our hand to meet our preferences and needs. We do not just have a hand full of goals all placed equally next to one another, however. We often value some goals over others and a deep goal we strongly prioritize might give rise to other sub-goals related to its accomplishment. To envision this, Miall (2007: 79) offers the metaphor of a goal tree (Figure 4).

Most actors' behaviors and attitudes are determined by some kind of underlying base goal that they consider to be fundamentally important with regard to a particular issue. This may be related to the actor's identity and values. To build upon this goal, he or she can supplement with higher order goals that stem from and are related to this. At any point, new goals can be included into the tree, goals can be replaced or goals from outside of the original tree can be incorporated. While stakeholders are shifting their goals, they may choose to act on one that roughly coordinates with a goal they believe another actor to have in order to promote cooperation on an issue. In the diagram below, perhaps goal a2 and b3 are compatible; actors A and B may chose to act on these goals, knowing it will produce a mutually beneficial result.

*Figure 4: Miall's Goal Trees*



In the fourth step outlined by Miall, parties can adopt new, jointly held goals. When this happens, actors may come to consider themselves a part of the same “team” - representatives of the same “plural subject.” This consideration helps them to overcome collective decision-making problems and allows them to consider what actions and outcomes will be best for the two of them without fear that the other will pursue a separate strategy (Miall 2007: 70-72). Both groups

in this situation have “mutually authorized” one another to take action for the good of the team (Hardy & Phillips 1998: 224). This is a point of mutual (genuine) collaboration, in which both actors take each other’s interests and needs into account, in order to achieve some synergistic, cooperative outcome.

Parties may respond to this new sense of team by altering their structures and identities over time. The adoption of a new, jointly held goal may cause actors to reformulate other goals, the way they prioritize them, and the value systems they use to generate these priorities. This is not always the case, and not the only avenue through which actors or organizations shift their identities, but it is one example that is consistent with the process of peacebuilding. A change in these structures and identities can cause a shift in the way that the parties relate to one another, perhaps, and hopefully promotes a more dynamic and peaceful quality of relationship between the two.

According to many conflict transformation theorists, this new relationship can be characterized as a “bliss point” which redefines the context of the conflict and creates a new social paradigm that allows all parties in conflict to realize some synergistic and innovative goal, whether an original goal or a new one created by the process. Galtung (1996: 96) calls this “transcendence,” i.e., “something new, *sui generis*, usually unexpected, has emerged from the process, meaning that the positive aspect of a conflict has been made use of, the challenge to transcend (hence the term) the underlying contradiction. Both goals are realized, possibly somewhat transformed. There is bliss.” More recent scholarship has adopted the word “transformation” in place of “transcendence,” but the underlying process is fundamentally the same as the one Galtung describes (Lederach 2003: 30; Miall 2007: 67).

*A Critical Note*

The actual process of transforming conflict and building peace is messier than these illustrations would lead one to believe. Simply adopting a cooperative stance on an issue does not guarantee that a genuine collaborative relationship will evolve, and cooperation puts actors at risk of being co-opted by more influential stakeholders. In an ideal world, a change in one actor's goals or identity signaling a desire to cooperate would trigger a similar change in another organization. However, in an arena with stakeholders who hold differing levels of power, there is little initial incentive for the more powerful actors to share power with others by coordinating behavior.

Achieving genuine collaboration in the face of unequal influence can require a fundamental shift in the more powerful party's goals. Coordinated behavior must offer a greater good than maintaining influence, as could be the case when dominant stakeholders recognize considerable potential gains from synergies, innovation, or growth (Hardy & Phillips 1998: 228). In the absence of this, contention may be an appropriate reaction for the less powerful group, as it can help less powerful stakeholders gain legitimacy and demand inclusion into arenas where they have been marginalized. Hardy and Phillips explain that "failure to recognize the importance of conflict leads to preference for the status quo and an implicit adoption of the viewpoint of powerful stakeholders" (Hardy & Phillips 1998: 228). The creative and synergistic outcomes typically associated with cooperating can also result from conflict, if groups use conflict to force a change in other stakeholders' behavior that results in a more just or equitable structure overall (Hardy & Phillips 1998: 218).

### *Peacebuilding and the Political Arena*

It is not hard to imagine how the above theory can be applied to the political arena, where parties to conflict over legislation, ideologies, and allocation of resources are constantly forming

and reforming. These conflicts are sometimes addressed in an adversarial manner and other times in a cooperative one; different groups demonstrate different levels of access to decision-making power, such that certain actions eventually tend to lead to collaborative and inclusionary outcomes while others produce coercive and exclusionary results. Cooperation on one issue may be followed with conflict on the next, but a long-term strategy of integration and genuine collaboration can often yield opportunities for stakeholders to share resources, information, and expertise that allow them to develop more effective policy, bring in more interested parties, and better serve the community.

*i. Political Structure and Peacebuilding*

Often the structure of the political system plays a large role in determining how these conflicts of interest will be addressed and what opportunities exist for long-term processes of change. There has been considerable scholarly interest in the argument that representative democracies are inherently more peaceful (nonviolent, inclusive, collaborative) than other political systems. Galtung warns against making this assumption in all cases, stressing that democracies are still often belligerent on the international stage and that they can still be highly stratified with decision-making power concentrated in the hands of a few political elites (Galtung 1996: 49-56). However, democratic structures still seem to be compatible with positive peace processes on some level. They allow large segments of the population some access to decision-making in forums designed to represent a diversity of voices in the production of constructive policy solutions.

Oliver Richmond (2005: 111) argues that it is not specifically the democratic system, but rather liberal governance structures in general that create avenues for peaceful change: the protection of rights and freedoms (particularly freedom of expression, freedom of association,

and freedom of the press), a fair and independent judicial system, and a vibrant civil society. It is not the simple process of voting for elected representatives that is particularly effective in transforming conflicts, but other characteristics of liberal democracies that offer potential pathways for peaceful social change.

### *ii. The U.S. Local Governance System*

In the U.S. political system, the most local level of government, where citizens and Citizen Sector Organizations often have the most access to decision-making power, is the municipal government, which has jurisdiction over towns, cities, and villages. These jurisdictions are diverse and include towns with populations of less than one hundred as well as gigantic metropolises like New York City. The municipal government is responsible to the county, state, and federal government. Within a municipal government, legislative bodies take on different forms. The Municipal Form of Government Survey indicate that over 80% of municipal governments use some form of either a mayor-council structure (with the mayor as a top executive overseeing the legislative body of the city council), or a council-manager system (in which the city council is the top legislative authority while the manager holds centralized responsibility for city administrative functions) (DeSantis & Renner 2002: 95). The council, executive/mayor, and city manager have the ultimate legislative authority to craft, prepare, pass, and enforce legislation as well as to distribute public resources through the city budget.

### *iii. Implications for CSO Advocacy*

As a result, an attempt by a CSO, an outside stakeholder, to influence policy will constitute an attempt to influence these policymakers. Other stakeholders in the legislative process, who may also seek influence on a variety of issues, include: the local judiciary; law enforcement; schools, utilities and energy providers, waste collection and other public works; the

local media; chambers of commerce, developers, or other business and economic interests; and various types of influential socialites and local celebrity figures. Formal avenues for influence include town hall and community meetings as well as official governmental hearings on legislation. Informally, stakeholders may influence policy through their relationships with one another and with members of the council, the executive or manager, and any other policymakers in their communities. As CSOs participate in this process, they can cooperate on some issues and contest others. The quality of the relationships between stakeholders seeking to influence policy and policymakers themselves is constantly changing, and there are many opportunities for adopting innovative or collaborative approaches to improving community well-being.

### *Summary*

Peace is a process of responding to everyday instances of conflict and change, while at the same time building norms that allow actors to engage in collaborative activities that all believe to be in the public interest. It has both a negative dimension, defined as the absence of physical violence, and a positive one, which seeks to go beyond eliminating violence to also achieve justice in structures and cultures. The process of peaceful change can be actively shaped and built through a variety of different mechanisms. One such mechanism, conflict transformation, offers a framework for conceptualizing actors' goals and priorities within the deeper context of the conflict.

Transforming the inconsistencies between these goals gives stakeholders the opportunity to change their own priorities, work cooperatively, and learn to operate with a team mentality. This in turn can have profound effects on the organization's structure, identity, and, ultimately, its relationships with other stakeholders. Pursuing this process does not lead directly to transcendence. The unequal distribution of power and influence may make it challenging for

actors to cooperate without compromising their interests to the more powerful status quo.

Peacebuilding embraces conflict as an indicator of social change needs, and as a result, both contestation and cooperation are potential actions a CSO may take in response to a particular episode of conflict.

### *Looking Forward*

CSO advocates must face political scenarios with all of these characteristics as they seek to influence policymakers' decisions about legislation and the distribution of resources. Since CSOs do not always engage in advocacy to the full extent that they can (Bass et al 2007: 17) and represent issues and populations that have been marginalized by normal political/social structures, they may not enter the advocacy process with the same political clout as other stakeholders. However, more often than not, CSOs have an important social change mission that merits inclusion. Maximizing their ability to achieve that mission requires advocates to be flexible and dynamic in their responses to each situation while maintaining the goal of building processes for peaceful change.

### CHAPTER 3

## A PEACEBUILDING MODEL OF CSO ADVOCACY

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Advocacy is a dynamic and amorphous concept that can be modeled in a variety of different ways. Chapters 1 and 2 have given the basic framework for developing a peacebuilding model of advocacy, one in which advocates are motivated to participate in politics by their underlying goals and identities. An advocacy effort often emerges in moments of conflict, when a CSO's interests differ from those of a policymaker or another influence group. CSOs use the tools of advocacy to respond to this episode, either by cooperating with or contesting the actions of other stakeholders. However, CSOs also participate in a wide variety of long-term influence strategies, from transforming agendas to pushing for long term shifts in the goals and priorities of policymakers. These two temporal layers of advocacy - the immediate push to support or reject a policy and the long-term focus on building opportunities for collaboration and inclusion – reflect the dual goals of peacebuilding. This interpretation of advocacy activities and their motivating factors can be helpful for understanding how different elements of an advocacy initiative can be pieced together to create a peaceful strategy that is in line with the CSO's long-term social change goals.

### *An Extended Example*

To build the structure for this framework of analysis, I will begin with a hypothetical example of a CSO faced with a conflict over a piece of legislation before the city council in its community. In this dilemma, a service-provider CSO has a direct interest - its future work will be impacted by the outcome of the policy decision and it is motivated by a desire to see a certain kind of structural change related to that policy. Throughout the example, I will examine ways in

which the CSO can remain true to its underlying mission for change while cultivating structures and institutions for peacebuilding.

*i. The Stakeholders*

Imagine that several members of the city council of a medium-sized city are jointly developing a bill reforming municipal funding for the construction of low-income housing. Several legislators have taken it upon themselves to address the issue and have announced their intentions to the wider community. This is a kind of reform that is often seen in medium or large U.S. cities where rents can become prohibitively high. City governments often fund or subsidize the construction of housing for individuals living below the poverty line, and it is not unusual for a city council to consider such a proposal. For example, Mayor Adrian Fenty's 2008 Housing First initiative in Washington D.C. included, among other objectives, the construction of supportive housing units to reduce chronic homelessness ("Biography Adrian M. Fenty").

The hypothetical CSO in this example was founded to provide direct services to the homeless and has a vested interest in ensuring that a large number of units of housing are constructed. This CSO may push for construction in an area where residents can easily access other services, perhaps in a downtown area. Not only would a policy such as this help the CSO on a practical level, by relieving some of the need for its services, but it would also be consistent with the organization's identity and values. For example, if the CSO was founded to serve the homeless through a commitment to ensure that every individual in the community has the right to safe and stable housing, they would strive to house as many people as possible.

The local chamber of commerce, which represents the collective interests of major businesses and industries in the city, might also have a position on the issue. It may be concerned with the possibility that attracting low-income community-members to its business areas could

hurt profits, raise crime rates and lower property values in the surrounding neighborhoods. Acting on these concerns, the local chamber of commerce could push for the number of units funded in the bill to be minimized or at the very least not located in business areas. They could offer alternatives, suggesting that the councilmembers try to do this either by acquiring a smaller property or including housing for low-income households in mixed-income developments primarily for the middle class. They might also express a desire to move this type of development to a more marginal area, farther away from main business districts.

The city council represents the dual interests of promoting economic growth and the well-being of its citizens. It could potentially support the interests of either the CSO or the chamber of commerce, depending on the relative weight it assigns to each organization's goals. If the parties were to define their interests as described above, their goals would be in conflict. We could imagine this conflict playing out in a variety of different ways. For instance, it is possible that the conflict may never play out at all in the political arena. The city council may act autonomously, without seeking any input from one sector of the community or another. However, local governments are likely to be sensitive to the needs of their core constituencies as they must seek reelection (Andrews & Edwards 2005: 495). Imagine that the city council's decision can be swayed by the information it receives and its changing perceptions of the needs of its constituencies.

#### *ii. Courses of Action*

The service-provider CSO first has the choice of responding to the issue through advocacy in an attempt to influence policymakers' eventual decisions. The organization's mission, or its underlying goal, is to ensure that community members can enjoy safe and secure housing options. To adhere to this, they will likely want as many citizens to

benefit from this expansion of low-income housing as possible. Since they also provide services themselves (perhaps they operate an emergency shelter, a dining room, or a place for individuals experiencing homelessness to shower or store belongings) they might also have a secondary interest in seeing the continuation and availability of these kinds of services in times of need.

Achieving these goals through advocacy can be tackled through a variety of strategies. Consider that the bill has not yet been written. The CSO might seek to influence how it is developed by generating media attention around the issue, giving their expert opinion on how it can be framed and what other issues should be considered simultaneously. The CSO might also attempt to integrate itself into legislative writing process by petitioning for inclusion on a committee that develops the bill. If that option is not available, the CSO could push for inclusion in the decision-making process by meeting with the councilmembers privately to discuss their viewpoints or by offering expert testimony and research in public forums about the issue.

When the bill does come to a vote, the CSO can lobby for its passage or rejection, depending on if the final bill actually aligns with their interests. If a piece of legislation is passed, the organization can push to be included in a formal body that monitors its implementation, or monitor it from the exterior by conducting research on its effectiveness. The CSO can also take proactive steps to shape the future of how policymakers consider the issue of low-income housing. For example, they could join a coalition of advocates who share resources and expertise. In election season, the CSO could educate voters about candidates' positions on affordable housing questions. Through this type of process, CSOs may eventually have some ability to shaping the long-term ideological perspective of the city council.

Each of these steps offers an effective way for CSOs to ensure that their interests on the question of low-income housing policy are substantially represented. However, with the

exception of the final step, this hypothetical advocacy agenda does not offer a clear picture for how the CSO might position themselves to better address related issues more effectively in the future. The CSO might not only be concerned with housing issues, it may also have a viewpoint on an issue such as healthcare or something as simple as the routes of public busses. This is where the framework of peacebuilding can be helpful. It incorporates the CSO's driving interest in advocating around a particular issue with an understanding of the kind of society the organization may eventually want to promote.

*iii. Episode and Epicenter*

The *episode* within the hypothetical conflict is the debate over the outcome of the bill that considers the construction of low-income housing units. However, the epicenter of the conflict is more complex. It could be described by a parties' perception of business interests and low-income interests as fundamentally antagonistic or by a stakeholders use of different criteria to measure success and development in their community. This same epicenter may give rise to other episodes of conflict as well. For example, a proposed sales tax may also have a different impact on business than on low-income consumers, and a tax proposal may generate tension and debate over whose interests are being taken into account by policymakers.

*iv. Peacebuilding*

Recognizing the epicenter of the conflict gives the CSO (and the chamber of commerce) the opportunity to modify their behavior and attitudes towards each other in the short term. It is possible that the CSO might still pursue aggressive expansion of affordable housing, but they might take care to frame the issue in a way that does not seem hostile to business, by highlighting the savings to taxpayers of an effective safety net for example. While the goals of

the service providers have remained the same at this point, their actions towards each other while pursuing these goals have changed.

However, in this situation, stakeholder's goals are still incompatible and one side's victory represents at least a partial loss for the other. Actors have an incentive to compete with one another for resources and as a result, they are limited in the scope of outcomes that they are capable of achieving. To attain a more synergistic outcome, in which actors can draw on each other's strengths and expertise, parties could start to change the goals they hold and how they prioritize them. If the CSO's initial goal was to "maximize the construction of downtown housing units" it could supplement quantity for increased quality and longevity and replaces the goal with "place a certain number of families in extremely stable, long-term affordable housing." Since stable, permanent housing units are less likely to lead to crime or falling property values, it now becomes easier for the CSO to coordinate its actions with those of the chamber of commerce.

This stage, however, is also the one in which advocates face the most danger of having their fundamental goals co-opted or marginalized by more powerful actors. If the CSO and the chamber of commerce had equal influence, we could expect that one organization's attempts to coordinate would provide incentives for the other to respond to with changes that also facilitate collaboration. However, a typical municipal chamber of commerce represents many wealthy constituents who vote frequently and contribute to political campaigns and public initiatives. As a result, the chamber of commerce is more likely to be better integrated into decision-making processes and capable of exerting greater influence than a service provider representing those temporarily without a home. The chamber of commerce, being well integrated, has the capacity

to meet its immediate objectives, and thus has little incentive to share its influence with another stakeholder, especially one with an opposing position.

A CSO risks shifting its goals and priorities too dramatically in order to facilitate coordination, especially when there is no reciprocal response from the chamber of commerce. In this situation, the CSO may respond with a strategy of contention. A noncooperative response can also be derived from a shift in the organization's goals. Conflict is not productive if its sole motivation is to "beat" the other party, but if an actor adopts the goal of gaining access to a particular decision-making arena, this can set the stage for more constructive cooperation in the future. There are a variety of objectives that CSOs can push for using strategies of conflict and contention: forcing a change in how a policymaker frames or considers an issue; fighting exclusion from a committee or meeting; lobbying against a bill; or demonstrating the failures of a particular policy's implementation. Through contention, CSOs can actually make the decision-making arena more just and inclusive, which creates new opportunities for innovation and growth. Hardy & Phillips (1998: 218) echo this point. "The creative and synergistic outcomes, which many writers associate with collaboration may also follow from conflictual interorganizational relationships."

In situations of unequal power distribution, it may take a long time before actors are able to coordinate their behavior in a way that promotes the kind of collaboration under which all members' goals are maximized. Under this mutual, genuine collaboration, parties cede legitimacy to one another in order to pursue joint goals for a collective purpose. For this to happen, members do not have to possess equal amounts of political power, dominant powerholders do not have to cede power to less powerful actors, and resources do not have to be distributed equally among actors (Hardy & Phillips 1998; 224). The key characteristic of a

collaborative relationship is not complete equality, but rather a just sharing of the decision-making burden. All members must feel that their underlying interests are legitimately recognized in the relationship and that they can trust the other members to pursue a strategy that is not harmful to these goals. Many relationships never reach this point. However, if this is a goal that actors consciously recognize they may be able to better target their cooperation and contention on issues that arise in order to build this kind of mutual legitimacy.

In this particular example, if the chamber of commerce has greater structural influence on the way that policymakers make decisions, it is unlikely that the CSO and the chamber of commerce will develop a legitimate joint goal. The CSO may need to adopt a noncooperative strategy, targeted at deepening its legitimacy as a key stakeholder on low-income issues. This may require the CSO to direct greater resources towards agenda-setting, inclusion, and monitoring aspects of advocacy instead of focusing on generating direct or indirect support for a particular bill.<sup>9</sup> It can contest the way the chamber of commerce frames its lobbying activities, offer research to support opposing claims, attempt to gain inclusion in legislative hearings, or other related strategies. A deepening of influence resulting from pushing for change in the dynamics of the decision-making process can allow the organization to more effectively pursue its mission in the future even if it must forego some resources that could have been dedicated to aggressive intervention in immediate outcome of the bill being considered.

In the rare but possible case that actors are able to achieve genuine mutual collaboration on the issue from the outset (perhaps the CSO has a high degree of legitimacy and strong relationships with policymakers), parties could develop a joint goal shared by both members.

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<sup>9</sup> As a side note, lobbying *cannot* comprise too large of a proportion of a CSOs activities if it has nonprofit 501(c)(3) status. If this is the case, the organization runs the risk of violating the “substantial part” test used by the IRS. 501(c)(3) organizations can do some lobbying, but this amount is highly restricted and cannot be done using any funds from government grants.

Instead of the opposing goals to “maximize” or “minimize” downtown housing units, they may find areas where their goals align and build collaboration from there. The chamber of commerce is seeking to build a community that is friendly to business and economic growth. The CSO is working towards a society in which the poorest members of the community can find reliable, supportive permanent shelter. Both of these goals can be easily extended to develop the joint goal of “expanding economic opportunity” or “establishing a successful community.”

One could imagine potential solutions to the episode of conflict which utilize mutually shared goals, such as the creation of several mixed-income supportive housing developments placed close to each other which offer on-site counseling services for low-income residents in addition to emergency low-income housing located slightly farther away. This creates additional residential space for middle-income households in downtown areas who can patronize local business and minimize the fall in property values. At the same time offering comprehensive counseling to low-income households helps improve quality and longevity of services. Placing developments near enough together creates opportunities for support networks to develop among tenants, which can help families assist each other in the transition to middle-class lifestyles. A proposal such as this does not provide an ultimate solution to the challenge of affordable housing and would likely not be adopted by a council because of its high costs, but imagining what it could look like if it were created allows both the CSO and the chamber of commerce to understand how they could maximize their interests within a single episode of conflict.

Adopting a joint, collaborative goal on one issue, even if this goal does not translate into an ideal policy outcome, may help parties see opportunities for future collaboration on other issues. The CSO and chamber of commerce might look at areas where they can continue to work as a team and change the structures of their programs or actions in response. Perhaps the CSO

has been meaning to develop a professional development program for its clients while a group of local businesses in need of skilled, trained employees could recruit from this program. The CSO and the chamber of commerce could develop professional partnerships and initiatives to accommodate these opportunities for growth. In time, this could potentially lead to a shift in how organizations understand their identities in relation to those of other actors, and has the potential to transform the relationships these actors form with one another. If relationships are transformed so that actors address conflicts of interests in a mutually beneficial or constructive way, these changes can form part of the process of peacebuilding. Although it is extremely challenging to build relationships such as these, simply having the goal of doing so provides a guiding framework which advocates of all kinds can use to tailor their activities and organizational strategies.

#### *Alternate Models of CSO Advocacy*

In the extended example given above, advocacy can be a tool for CSOs to transform conflict among themselves and/or with government and other actors while promoting their long-term change goals. It is important to create a model of participation in the policy arena that is consistent with the goals actors have for themselves and society. If CSOs' goals do include fostering community well-being through collaboration then a peacebuilding model offers an appropriate framework for envisioning advocacy. However, it is also helpful to explore alternative models of CSO advocacy that have been proposed which are organized around different fundamental goals within the sector. This helps us to understand the need for a peacebuilding model of advocacy and examine where the peacebuilding model can be the most helpful in filling theoretical gaps.

##### *i. The Conflict Model*

Anheier and Salamon describe a “conflict model” of advocacy, used by scholars to analyze advocacy behavior in the U.S and internationally. In this model the sector is understood as “the organized vehicle of citizen protest against dominant elites in both political and economic life” which seeks to “alter the balance of social power” (Anheier & Salamon 2006: 91). I myself have heard advocacy framed in this way by many CSO practitioners. CSOs seek to “legitimize” and “empower the disadvantaged” by challenging existing power structures (Anheier & Salamon 2006: 93). In this model, advocates are constantly seeking to affect the decisions of elites in an environment where they are marginalized or excluded, often due to a lack of perceived importance or relevance. The model seems to imply that the more marginalized a group or issue is, the more likely it is to attract advocates around it, since it is exactly this disenfranchised status that makes advocacy necessary.

This model of advocacy deals pragmatically with the issue of power in the policy domain, acknowledging that policymakers have the ultimate authority to determine policy and giving advocates the role of challenging and checking that power. However, the conception is reactive rather than proactive. The central goal of “conflict model” advocacy is to combat instances of exclusion, injustice, or discrimination rather than to build new opportunities for growth. This offers a very narrow illustration of CSO goals, assuming that CSOs become involved in the policy process as advocates due to an underlying goal that motivates their actions.

It is easy to think of examples of CSOs created with goals that are different than checking dominant political elites. The Humane Society seeks to represent the interest of animals, which surely have no voice of their own in the political process, but it does not have to actively fight political elites nor does it actively seek to “change the social order.” Some organizations may

indeed be founded out of a desire to do just this, while others may pursue advocacy activities with these kinds of goals some of the time. The model is particularly applicable to countries with illiberal governance structures, where CSOs are the primary platforms for organized citizen protest and a large number of organizations may indeed value their role as checks against the abuse of elite power. However, in the wider realm of CSO advocacy, and particularly in our evaluation of CSO advocacy in the United States, this model can represent only a subset of the sector.

*ii. The Social Capital Model*

The second model of advocacy that is described often by scholars is a social-capital model which “focuses on [CSO]’s social integrative and participatory function and the contribution they make to community building” (Anheier and Salamon 2006: 93). The idea of social capital and its importance for societal development was popularized by Robert Putnam in his 2000 book “Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community” in which he argued that participation in the citizen sector and broader civil society was a key element for social well-being in community and political life. The networks of relationships that exist between people are hypothesized to have a strong influence on the success of a variety of sectors including health, public safety, education, and more (Putnam 2000: p 27). CSOs engaging in advocacy are believed to act to promote the growth of these networks, or social capital. Citizens who volunteer with CSOs and participate in civil society are understood as gaining skills for civic engagement and cooperation with one another that they carry over into the political arena through broad civic participation.

Unlike the first model, the social capital model describes advocacy as a process that facilitates proactive social change. In this respect, this model is similar to the peacebuilding one

outlined earlier in this thesis. However, not all CSOs conduct advocacy through broad grassroots outreach and community organizing (Clemens 2006: 210), which are the process hypothesized to build social capital. Many institutions experience success using a professionalized advocacy model, where advocacy is conducted by full-time staff members in organizations that may not even have a direct connection to the community they serve. CSOs approach advocacy using different techniques, not all of which build social capital in the broader community. As in the case of the conflict model of advocacy, the social capital model gives an accurate description of some advocacy activities conducted by some organizations. In this case, it describes the work of large membership-based, grassroots focused CSOs.

#### *Importance of the Peacebuilding Model*

Both of the above models are helpful and reflect real-life practitioner perspectives on the goals and methods that characterize their advocacy work. However, both fail to represent the goals of a significant part of the citizen sector. A peacebuilding model of advocacy, on the other hand, is much more flexible and dynamic, and can provide a model for analyzing the advocacy activities of a much broader segment of the population. It allows for the fact that each actor comes to the political process with their own immediate goals. Actors can *both* respond to conflict and proactively seek to build opportunities for participation and collaboration, rather than focusing exclusively on one action or the other. A peacebuilding model of advocacy can be applied to a diverse array of CSOs with a variety of organizational structures. The one common characteristic that is assumed by the model is that CSO advocates seek to create a positive change that promotes the overall well-being of the community. The citizen sector is diverse enough that some organizations do not fit these criteria, but a peacebuilding model offers a reasonable approximation for the goals of a large part of the sector.

*Summary*

The theory of peacebuilding outlined in Chapter 2 can provide a critical framework for analyzing how CSOs approach advocacy. Since advocates can frame their goals in countless ways and each goal can be pursued with a variety of different tactics, a unifying framework can help advocates form a cohesive advocacy strategy. A peacebuilding model of advocacy provides an organization with the tools to analyze both the conflict that brought them to advocate and the underlying cause of that conflict. With this understanding, the CSO can better analyze the courses of action available to it and the short- and long-term consequences of each choice. In this model, collaborative action represents an objective that all actors in a conflict can strive for and a framework for understanding what kinds of strategies facilitate this kind of relationship. In the end, the cultivation of genuine collaborative relationships allows parties to jointly craft strategies for pursuing a just and peaceful vision of society.

Peacebuilding is not the only model that can be used to interpret advocacy activities. Other scholars have interpreted CSO involvement in policy using different sets of tools. Two of these models are a conflict model of advocacy and the social capital model of advocacy. In the conflict model, CSOs advocate in order to counterbalance the power held by political elites, whereas in a social capital model of advocacy, CSOs seek to promote networking and civic engagement among the general population. However, both of these models only account for a certain segment of the citizen sector and fail to accurately capture the diversity of the sector. A peacebuilding model of advocacy accounts for actors who are constantly changing their goals, behaviors, and relationships.

*Looking Forward*

Theoretical frameworks are only valuable for their ability to help us better interpret reality. The hypothetical scenario described at the beginning of this chapter offered a few initial insights into how a peacebuilding model of advocacy could be adapted to real life challenges facing CSOs advocating in local U.S. communities. Each individual CSO has its own organizational structure, engages in advocacy in its own particular way, and faces a unique situation when seeking to influence policy. Can this general framework of peacebuilding offer insight into the challenges faced by a real-life CSO?

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDY: LIFT-DC

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The following case study will examine how a real CSO engages in advocacy and how a peacebuilding model can be used to analyze these activities and their potential. The CSO selected is LIFT-DC, resource counseling organization that provides services to individuals and families in the DC metropolitan area. I selected the organization, in part because I have volunteered there for four years, was a student director in the local office for one year, and have played a role in forming and leading an advocacy initiative there. Because of this, I have a strong, detailed understanding of the organization's strengths and challenges, as well as the context within which it operates. However, the organization also exemplifies many of the challenges facing other CSOs providing similar services in Washington, DC and it was also selected for its ability to serve as an illustrative example. Similar to many other small CSOs, LIFT-DC struggles with high turnover, lack of funding, low staff expertise, and a lack of credibility in political arenas, all of which hinder its ability to engage in effective advocacy. As a result, LIFT-DC is particularly in need of a *strategic* approach. In this chapter, I will use the tools developed in the previous chapters to analyze LIFT-DC's current engagement in advocacy and its options for the future.

#### *Introduction to LIFT and LIFT-DC*

LIFT-DC, where I served as a local director and first became involved with advocacy, is the Washington, DC branch of a CSO whose aim is to combat poverty across the country by helping low-income individuals connect with resources in their community. A network of student volunteers learn about resources in their communities and then work in partnership with clients to help tackle problems and access food, clothing, transportation, education, healthcare,

and stable employment. While LIFT is a national organization with offices in various cities, each local office is deeply integrated into the community where it is located, and has goals of improving that community in particular, and the resources and volunteers needed to run each office come almost exclusively from the local area. As a result, LIFT-DC can be considered a local, community-based CSO for the purposes of this thesis.

LIFT-DC does not engage in advocacy as a formal local initiative, although there is an informal student committee designed and led independently by another volunteer and myself. Institutional support for the committee is highly variable, and the projects that the committee engages in are often inconsistent. The initiative as a whole can count few measurable successes, despite having been in existence for several years. However, advocacy remains a topic of interest to staff and volunteers, and even our limited advocacy efforts have been met with enthusiasm. LIFT-DC offers an interesting case study, as its mission and values seem to call for advocacy-like activities, but it faces unique challenges in doing so and is limited in both human and monetary resources. As a result, the organization is in need of an advocacy strategy that can take into account its sometimes challenging identity while exploring ways to promote systemic change.

*i. Underlying Goals: Mission and Vision*

The mission and vision statements of any organization offer information about the way in which it defines its goals and about the work that it engages in to meet those goals. LIFT's mission is to "combat poverty and expand opportunity for all people in the United States," and its vision is to work towards "a day when all people in our country will have the opportunity to achieve economic security and pursue their aspirations" (LIFT). These statements were carefully and intentionally crafted by LIFT to represent its institutional objectives as clearly and concisely

as possible. Specifically, the two key phrases highlighted by LIFT staff are “combat poverty” and “expand opportunity.” The problem that LIFT seeks to address is the structural one of poverty, and the related problems with which it is often associated: homelessness, unemployment, hunger, poor health, lack of education, and more. It seeks to combat these challenges by “expanding opportunity” - giving people chances to utilize their strengths and to grow personally, financially, and professionally.

*ii. Related Goals: Model of Service*

LIFT seeks to approach this mission through several specific channels, the five main ones being to help clients: a) secure sources of food, transportation, clothing, etc; b) secure a stable income through employment and/or benefits; c) secure stable housing; d) secure entry into housing and training programs; and e) secure access to affordable healthcare and medical services. The manner in which it goes about accomplishing these objectives is determined by its organizational structure. LIFT does not have food, transportation assistance, clothing, jobs, benefits, housing, educational programs, or healthcare assistance to offer. Instead it has student volunteers, who help clients to access these opportunities with other organizations and programs in the city.

Community members in need of assistance are welcome to come into the office and meet individually with a volunteer, generally a university student. Together with the client, students work to develop goals and potential solutions for client’s challenges. In a meeting, clients and volunteers explore the client’s needs and strengths and work in partnership to find opportunities to connect with resources that exist in the community. A typical client meeting might play out as follows. A client may come in to the LIFT office, seeking employment. The student advocate (LIFT’s title for volunteers) will work with the client to talk through his or her situation. What

are her career goals? What kind of job has he had in the past? Does she have a résumé? What are his strengths and professional skills? Does she have children she needs to find childcare for in order to work? Does he have health insurance or access to affordable medical care or does he need a job that offers this? Is she authorized to work in the United States? Does he keep a monthly budget to track spending on the income he does receive? Has she applied for the public benefits she might be eligible for while searching for jobs? A job search is always more complex than merely sending in a few applications. LIFT student advocates provide a real service, helping individual clients navigate the interconnectedness of the challenges they may be faced with. The primary goal of the meeting is to help clients recognize their strengths, articulate their goals, and use this knowledge to find well-suited opportunities that exist in the community around them.

Typically there are around thirty student advocates in the DC office, each working in meetings such as the one described above for approximately five hours a week and collectively conducting 100-150 client meetings per month. The student advocates are managed by two or three full time AmeriCorps VISTAs, called Site Coordinators and two or three part time Student Directors (the former title was Local Director. I held this position from January 2008 through January 2009). Student Directors and Site Coordinators share responsibility for setting the direction of future office activity and supporting the day-to-day operations of volunteers. They are also responsible for all other programs, such as LIFT-DC's informal advocacy initiative.

#### *Current and Past Participation in Advocacy*

A belief in the importance of activism and advocacy has always been a part of the LIFT-DC model, although this has not always translated directly into organized advocacy. When CEO Kirsten Lodal co-founded the first chapter of what was to become LIFT she did so out of a desire to approach “service” as a powerful tool for building and transforming communities. She recalls

being frustrated by the stereotype she heard from others that service was somehow less serious a pursuit than the student political organizing or on-campus activism that was popular among her college classmates. She wanted to create an organization with a profound commitment to the idea that tackling challenges as one saw them in one's own community *was* a powerful form of activism and participation (Lodal 2010).

To this day, in the organization, volunteers are called SAs, or Student Advocates, representing the central importance of activism to the organization's model. However, the way in which the word "advocate" is used when referring to volunteers is the more colloquial use of the word: speaking on behalf of another. SAs represent clients to employers, landlords, lawyers, etc (Romatowski 2010). This particular role of the student advocate is critical; I have personally heard many clients express sincere gratitude for the support they have found in their meetings at LIFT-DC. However, there is a persistent criticism from SAs that they are afraid they are not going far enough addressing the challenges they see in the community. I have heard it referred to as a "band-aid" solution, implying that LIFT-DC addresses the symptoms of poverty and inequality in Washington DC (by putting a band-aid on them) without addressing the issues that caused that poverty to develop in the first place.

Services LIFT-DC provides, such as helping an individual without a home find a transitional shelter, are incredible acts, but providing these services does not change the fact that in the United States, several million more people will experience homelessness at some point over the course of a year (National Coalition for the Homeless). The system has already failed our clients by the time they arrive in our office needing our help. If the organization's mission is to "combat poverty and expand opportunity for all people in the United States," is providing counseling services really the most effective way to accomplish this, or could a systemic change

be more effective? These inequalities, examples of structural violence, will continue to exist despite the efforts of CSOs like LIFT-DC to help those who are marginalized by them. Even the CEO of LIFT, Kirsten Lodal, acknowledges that there are some systemic problems for which “no amount of individual advocacy will work” (Lodal 2010). Understanding this, SAs and LIFT-DC staff have participated in many discussions, both formal and informal, about the merits of becoming involved on a more structural level and several efforts have been made to develop a mechanism for representing LIFT’s goals and values in the local policymaking process.

*i. History*

LIFT-DC has its own particular history of advocacy work beyond the general vision of the national organization. In 2003 the DC office was launched by a Georgetown student inspired by how the organization was operating in other cities. Not long after the launch of the office, volunteers became frustrated by one particular challenge they saw their clients experiencing. The local government was failing to provide necessary information to community members who qualified for a particular public benefit program and so LIFT-DC decided to develop an advocacy initiative and attempt to create a change in the system.

The federal government offers a housing subsidy to those in poverty entitled the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Those who meet income requirements can submit an application to the local Housing Authority and if selected they receive a voucher which they present to landlords participating in the program. Households using the voucher are only required to pay rent payments totaling no more than 30% of their income, often significantly less than market rent, and the Housing Authority pays the landlord the difference between this and the rent on the apartment (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development).

The program is often a huge financial help to families who are able to enroll and allows families access affordable housing that might not otherwise have been able to. However, in DC the waiting list to receive a voucher is approximately 8 years long (Romatowski 2010) and so families in need must go through a long period of sacrifice and challenges before they can become eligible for the program. Once a family or individual receives a voucher, he or she has only a few months to find a landlord to accept it or the voucher will be passed on to the next person on the waiting list. Early LIFT-DC advocates were seeing clients who made it through the entire waitlist process but then were unable to find housing due to a lack of transparency and information about qualifying landlords and locations.

This situation, in which families in need had public benefits taken away because they faced a system so complicated that they were unable to navigate it, was not acceptable to the LIFT student advocates. It was preventing them from accomplishing one of their service goals, securing stable housing for clients, as well as their underlying goal of expanding opportunity for Washingtonians. After unsuccessfully requesting that local government compile information about eligible landlords, one enterprising student chose to create a database himself with the hope that once the model was successful, government would adopt it. Student advocates called landlords around the city, and after some time, they had generated a functional online housing database. However, maintenance of the database soon became too large of a project for a group of students, but the DC student advocates were able to assemble a coalition of community partners interested in the project and find a home for the database at the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown University (Lodal 2010).

Up until this point, the project was the model of a highly successful advocacy strategy. LIFT-DC volunteers felt that their fundamental interests were in conflict with the actions of the

DC Housing Authority. They first attempted to contest the status quo by attempting to get DCHA to change its activities, and when this was unsuccessful, switched to a more long-term strategy of demonstrating to policymakers that the need could be met with the hope that it would shift the priorities of those policymakers. They were able to cultivate cooperation with other stakeholders interested in the success of the project and worked collaboratively with the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown for a short while as they passed the project off and both groups sought to promote its success. Unfortunately, the Center for Social Justice was never able to fully launch the project, and it was never adopted on a systemic level.

A failed project is not necessarily a loss for the advocating organization, if they are able to realize sufficient gains from effort and generate momentum or partnerships for moving forward with their work and approaching projects from a new angle. However, in the case of LIFT-DC, after interest regarding the particular episode of conflict subsided, the advocacy initiative lost energy and in the following years, LIFT-DC's participation in advocacy dissipated. When I began as a student advocate in 2006, I found no real opportunities for me to participate in policy advocacy nor was I aware of any such activities being undertaken by office leadership. In fact, I only learned that the original advocacy initiative had taken place after being with the organization for four years. As a volunteer, I did learn how to question the justness of the situations my clients were facing but did not ask what place our organization had in reducing this injustice on a systemic level.

#### *ii. The Advocacy Committee*

As described briefly in the introduction to this thesis, during my time as a local student director at LIFT-DC (which was called National Student Partnerships at the time), I was asked by others on the office leadership team if I would be interested in exploring ways for the office to

become more involved in advocacy. I agreed to do so, and with the help of others in the office, founded an advocacy committee to bring together other students who were also interested. During the first semester that the committee was in existence, I began attending local community events to learn about policy issues and how they were affecting our clients, and hosted several discussions with the committee to discuss developing priorities and goals for involvement in advocacy. During these meetings we also began to have informal discussions about policy, policymakers and our relationship to these, which is the first basic step any new advocate can take.

During its second semester, the advocacy committee met more regularly and also incorporated a discussion of advocacy into a local office-wide training. LIFT-DC also became a member of a DC advocacy coalition, the Fair Budget Coalition, which brings together CSO stakeholders of all kinds to generate joint recommendations for the city's annual budget. Later in the semester, the committee sponsored a voter education, awareness, and registration campaign focused around the November 2008 elections. While the presidential election garnered a lot of attention, we also sought to raise awareness about the ways in which DC city council members' decisions about policy affect our daily life and work as well as those of our clients.

At the end of that semester, I left the organization briefly to study in South America and my successor in the local director position took over leadership of the committee. During her tenure, she focused on deepening the local offices ties to the Fair Budget Coalition and its ties to key players there, while continuing to generate discussion around policy and LIFT's work. In the last few months, she and I have taken on joint leadership of the committee and have concentrated on reaching out to new potential partners at other CSOs interested in similar issues and are planning a campaign to collect research and perspectives on the question of affordable housing

that can be formally presented to city council members and other policymakers in conjunction with the Fair Budget Coalition's recommendations.

Each of these activities is derived from separate goals and strategies in the advocacy toolkit. Informal discussion about issues is a preliminary approach to influencing how agendas are framed, while participation in a coalition reflects a long-term effort to change how CSOs with similar interests relate to one another and to policymakers. The two campaigns, voter registration and research collection are a preliminary step towards gaining inclusion and legitimacy although the organization has a long way to go before it is able to exert even the most minor influence on policymakers' decisions. Each of these projects were adopted sporadically and developed intermittently, with long periods of time in which the organization was not involved in policy at all. The committee is also highly dependent on the engagement of those leading it and has not been fully built into the local office structure. Without strong leadership, it is likely that involvement in advocacy would cease almost entirely.

#### *The Challenge of Advocacy at LIFT-DC*

The first and primary challenge facing LIFT-DC as it seeks to build advocacy is a lack of human resources and expertise. Student Advocates participate in the advocacy committee on top of their client service responsibilities. Given their additional academic commitment, most SAs do not have time to become as engaged in advocacy as they might like. Strategic advocacy also requires a large learning curve, as most SAs are not familiar with the local government structure in DC or the hot topic policy issues under consideration at any given time. It takes a long time for an interested SA to learn enough to feel comfortable offering suggestions for how the local office can participate. By the time advocacy committee members surpass this learning curve, they have often moved on from LIFT. SAs can only remain with the organization during the time

that they are in college and many find the organization later and must leave to concentrate on other activities before they graduate. The pressures of school and other commitment mean that many SAs stay committed to the organization for only a part of the time that they could and the base of potential participants in the advocacy committee turns over very frequently.

If leadership is not carried over from one semester to the next, those interested in advocacy must reinvent the wheel and design their strategy from scratch. This is what happened in the interim period between the burst of advocacy activity around the Online Housing Research Project and my initial attempts to advocate. The leadership corps that had generated engagement on the first issue had moved on and no one was available to fill the void. This is a challenge that is built into LIFT-DC's organizational structure and one that must be accommodated in all advocacy strategies.

The Site Coordinators are in the office full time, and so are most equipped for handling advocacy and transitions between leadership and membership bases. However, their salaries are funded by AmeriCorps, which places even stricter restrictions on the kinds of lobbying activities AmeriCorps members can participate in than the typical restrictions associated with LIFT's 501(c)(3) status. Site Coordinators are also with the organization for a maximum of two years – per AmeriCorps requirements – which represents a high rate of staff turnover among office leadership, making institutional knowledge even more difficult to build.

LIFT's challenges in engaging in advocacy are multifold, but this does not mean the organization is not suited to participate. The key objective is to build leadership and continuity, which can be done both within and outside of the organization. Offering volunteers the opportunity to participate in advocacy initiatives from the moment they walk into the door on their first day in the office is an important, if insufficient, first step. This gives volunteers an

opportunity to build their thoughts and plans about advocacy into their experience with the organization and maximizes the amount of time the volunteer can spend on advocacy when faced with other, external demands on their time. However, a model based solely on volunteer engagement alone cannot be successful in the long term as volunteers have other ultimate responsibilities and the level of engagement and learning curve required by advocacy exceed the time an all-student committee can consistently commit. The second step is building engaged student leadership. My own experiences have indicated that the committee only functions when a leader is in place that is able to dedicate several hours a week exclusively to advocacy activities. An internship model, where the advocacy committee leader spends more time in the office than a typical volunteer and has explicit advocacy-related activities might be effective here. Having two leaders instead of one has also been effective, as each one can hold the other accountable and pick up slack when one or the other cannot be as engaged in the project. In terms of institutional leadership, Site Coordinators cannot be engaged in advocacy activities or leadership activities, but this does not mean they cannot be a source of support to student leaders, helping them find information and resources.

Other exterior options for growing leadership and maintaining continuity include the development of a strong resource and information base so that volunteers do not need to spend as much time researching key players, avenues of influence, potential partners, or potential projects. LIFT-DC maintains a web-based wiki with this kind of information about services in the community. Similar information should be collected about advocacy. Most importantly, though, community partners can be the strongest resources and promoters of continuity available. The cultivation of strong mentorship relationships with key professional advocates who will remain in their positions even while the staff at LIFT-DC turns over can be critical for sharing

information across generations of volunteers, building pathways for collaboration, and achieving maximum impact.

### *Peacebuilding Strategies for Involvement*

If the organization is able to supersede its engagement challenges, it certainly has potential as a player in the advocacy process and could benefit from higher levels of involvement. LIFT's mission is to “combat poverty and expand opportunity” and its other program goals of securing housing, employment, healthcare, clothing, and transportation can be pursued in a variety of ways, including through policy advocacy. Maximizing its ability to meet these goals for the most people possible requires that LIFT-DC have greater interest in structural change. Anne Romatowski at the LIFT national office explains: “our local offices [such as LIFT-DC] and our clients are constantly affected by public policies” (Romatowski 2010). Changes in policy can dramatically alter the number of Washingtonians needing LIFT-DC's services or the types of services they utilize. LIFT-DC staff and SAs react to this in their capacity as service providers, by learning new skills and building expertise in key areas of need. However, they also have the option of acting proactively by playing a role in how this policy is made and determined.

LIFT-DC has a very diverse set of goals that it works towards and is a stakeholder in a variety of issues affecting low-income populations in Washington DC. Holding a variety of goals gives the organization a good deal of flexibility when engaging in advocacy. The local office cannot feasibly respond to all episodes of conflict it finds itself in (instances in which members of the organization feel frustrated or alienated by policy or when a policy decision negatively affects LIFT-DC's ability to conduct its work). The organization is thus left with the choice of pursuing only a select strategy for engagement that may more thoroughly take into account how

each episode of engagement will affect the organization's long-term success at achieving its goal, "combating poverty and expanding opportunity" for DC citizens within city structures, institutions, and norms.

The first lens that peacebuilding offers for choosing the most strategic path for meeting its objective and influencing policy is that of episodes and epicenters. As mentioned above, it is very easy for the organization to identify episodes of conflict that it faces. If a large number of clients come to the office all needing the same service which monopolizes volunteer time and prevents LIFT-DC from addressing other issues, this is an episode of conflict. SAs have a vested interest in seeing an institutional change that might reduce the number of Washingtonians needing services in this area. It is these episodes that propel volunteers to become engaged in advocacy; the Online Housing Resource Project was an attempt to address an episode where a conflict of interest arose between the policy status quo, and LIFT-DC's goals. The next step for LIFT-DC is connecting these episodes of conflict to the epicenters of the conflicts of interest. A truly effective advocacy strategy should address the episode, but focus its efforts on the epicenter of a conflict.

The epicenter of the conflicts of interest between LIFT-DC and institutional elites is more nebulous and harder to pinpoint but arguably more important. Perhaps LIFT-DC volunteers feel frustrated by their inability to solve certain problems because of a disconnect in the DC community between the values and needs of Washington's low-income, largely minority community and those of the wealthy elites who also are members of the community but often have greater access to policymaking. Perhaps it is a conflict over the way in which policymakers value the interests and inputs of developers or businesses over those of CSOs, or between the insights of professionals and those of students. The true epicenter of a conflict cannot be

objectively known, and so it is up to LIFT-DC to select the lens that seems to be most appropriate to the situation it faces. An advocacy strategy should always keep the resolution of the epicenter of the conflict as its ultimate end-goal, as this will help promote continuity across responses to different episodes to conflict, allow for the building of collaborative relationships over time and develop mechanisms for addressing future episodes of conflict in the most productive manner possible.

For its small size and organizational constraints, LIFT-DC has been fairly successful at forming its short term responses to episodes conflict in a way that promotes peaceful change, and inclusion. Informal and formal discussions with SAs are intended to build opportunities for volunteer inclusion and to allow SAs to channel some of their immediate frustrations with policy in a productive way. Similarly, voter education and civic engagement are intended to extend this same objective to the wider community that LIFT-DC serves. Participation in coalition work creates opportunities for LIFT-DC to collaborate on particular issues with other similarly-minded CSOs and channel a stronger, combined voice.

However, the key challenge facing LIFT-DC as it seeks to promote its mission and cultivate a flourishing community is the need to focus on the epicenters of the conflicts it deals with. While these are numerous, one undeniable epicenter is the level of weight and credence that the opinions and views of LIFT-DC Student Advocates are given in policymaking. Clearly, when seeking to *influence* policy in the long-term, LIFT-DC must build its reputation as a legitimate stakeholder in the field. Currently this level of institutional power wielded by LIFT-DC on any given issue is very limited. The voter education and registration project did not involve enough people to have a significant impact on the outcome of this or future elections (although increasing civic engagement, even among a few people, is not a bad thing). LIFT-DC

is still a new and untried member of the Fair Budget Coalition, and does not often have the opportunity to play an active role in the decisions the coalition makes or the strategies that it pursues, although LIFT-DC's voice is much stronger here than in the general policy arena. In the current project, collecting research and perspectives from clients and SAs about affordable housing issues, LIFT-DC is only one voice among many and is likely to have only a marginal effect on how the issue is framed overall.

However, in each of these areas, the organization is slowly carving out a small niche for itself. Influence over a small population can transform into greater structural influence if the organization shapes its strategy correctly. Through coalition membership, LIFT-DC can build relationship and seek out opportunities for joint, mutually beneficial action with others. A campaign designed to collect perspectives of those affected by the shortage of affordable housing and disseminate this along with information about LIFT-DC's experience with the issue is a starting point for LIFT-DC to begin to get its name out there and cultivate attention around its issues.

Recognizing this starting point can allow Student Advocates to move on to the next tool available from the peacebuilding model of advocacy, Miall's transformation process (see page 42). The first step is for LIFT-DC staff and volunteers to consider how they might change their attitudes and behavior to better achieve their goals. Perhaps they can behave more professionally while simultaneously emphasizing the particular strengths that their status as students gives them. For example, students are closely connected to a variety of research and scholarly tools and institutions that may allow them to explore issues in new ways or in greater depth than professional practitioners may have time to do. Engaging in activities that utilize these strengths and make them known to others can be an important first step.

The next step is for LIFT-DC to begin to evaluate smaller or short-term goals. Should the ultimate responsibility for advocacy fall to a committee or a centralized leader figure? Are partnerships with coalitions a more important objective than partnerships with other service providers directly? How much staff and volunteer time can be allotted to advocacy and how much should be allotted to client service. Hopefully these shifts allow some opportunities for LIFT-DC to coordinate with other stakeholders – to share information, engage in a joint venture, or some other activity. Finally, LIFT-DC can potentially deepen its influence over policy by making some adjustments to its structures and programs. It is already moving in this direction. The DC office recently acquired a new executive director, a full-time permanent staff member with a non-AmeriCorps salary in charge of the DC metropolitan region, who will be able to promote greater consistency in the organization's actions. This person will be integral to building and maintaining relationships with other professionals in the Washington DC region, which is a key starting point for facilitating cooperation and collaboration. As mentioned above, LIFT-DC's advocacy efforts can also benefit from changes in its recruiting model for advocacy leaders. Currently it recruits only volunteers for client service and then asks them if they would also be interested in participating in advocacy once they have joined the organization. Some of the limits to volunteer engagement could be expanded if the organization recruited some SAs to take on explicit advocacy roles.

If the organization chooses to engage in shifts such as these, it will likely lead to a slight shift in how LIFT-DC perceives its identity as a CSO in the DC community. It can come to see itself as an actor in creating community change as well as in providing services to those in need. Part of this transition is already beginning. The national organization LIFT and the local DC office are both expanding and reforming their strategies. They are seeking to improve the quality

of services offered but also to facilitate a more thorough vision of LIFT's place in the process of creating change. It is my impression that the organization is shifting its goals and structures in such a way so that participation in local policy advocacy may become easier in years to come. The CEO of the national office, Kirsten Lodal, explained that she "would love to see LIFT get more involved in policy" (Lodal, 2010) and her colleague Anne Romatowski echoed this, stressing that local policy in particular merited greater exploration.

The ultimate objective of this is that as LIFT begins to position itself as a key policy stakeholder, it can begin to wield greater power when cooperating with or confronting other stakeholders. It can achieve greater impact with any of its advocacy activities if its views are considered legitimate and other stakeholders value their professional relationships with LIFT-DC volunteers and staff. This is only one epicenter of conflict that LIFT-DC finds itself involved in, there are many more involving the deep-seeded questions of poverty and marginalization that LIFT-DC's clients face, but it may be one of the most manageable epicenters of conflict that LIFT can begin to tackle and provides an important starting point for a young organization just beginning its engagement in policy and advocacy.

## CONCLUSION

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Advocacy has become a hot topic in the citizen sector in recent years, as CSOs gain greater political legitimacy and grow in their ability to influence policy. Through advocacy, CSOs with a direct stake in the well-being of its constituents and members of the community where they work, can expand beyond simply offering services and seek to promote systemic change. One central way in which CSOs do so, is through efforts to influence policymakers and their decisions. Local legislative bodies and government entities are ultimately responsible for deciding what kinds of policies to adopt and how best to do so. As a result they have the most profound formal influence over policy of all stakeholders. However, they do not make their decisions independently, and their actions can be influenced by the general public. Voters make their stances on issues known during election times, and during all other points in the policy process a variety of avenues exist for civil society to participate in policy. One of these avenues is advocacy, a set of strategies for shaping the public good that are uniquely suited to the Citizen Sector, composed of organizations that are founded to build and improve their communities.

Advocates can influence policymakers and policy in a variety of different ways. They can play a role in setting agendas, making decisions about the shaping of legislation, influencing the success of bills, monitoring policies as they are implemented and transforming the long-term goals of society and decision-making entities. A CSO's strategy for engaging in these activities can lead to competition between stakeholders as they address conflicts of interest over policy, but it can also build opportunities for collaboration and growth. To choose an appropriate strategy, CSOs must closely analyze the context of the situation they find themselves in, and target their behaviors, goals, and relationships with one another in order to foster constructive long-term outcomes.

A Peacebuilding model of advocacy focuses on these long-term opportunities for institutional change while also offering strategies for approaching particular conflicts that emerge between stakeholders. Both conflict and cooperation are necessary parts of the process peacebuilding and both can be effective tools for helping actors reduce physical, structural, and cultural violence in their communities. The reduction of these inequalities and injustices can help actors concentrate on building something new, opportunities for shared goals and perspectives that promote community well-being.

This model can guide advocates as they seek to advocate, helping them to identify strengths, clarify goals, and identify potential areas for growth or transformation. While other models of advocacy exist, the peacebuilding model is a dynamic and flexible concept that provides a clear framework for CSOs of all kinds. It allows real-life CSOs facing complex social institutions and a diverse network of relationships to understand the underlying context in which they operate. This knowledge provides clues as they shift goals and strategies in an attempt to maximize their ability to achieve their missions and promote peaceful change in their societies.

#### *Agenda for Future Research*

##### *i. The Promotion of CSO Advocacy:*

Several interesting works have been produced seeking ways to incentivize greater engagement in advocacy by CSOs. I believe that this is an area that merits more critical study as advocacy can be a crucial process for CSOs seeking to grow and expand their influence in their communities. Several insightful investigations I encountered over the course of this research, as well as my own personal observations, have demonstrated that a lack of both resources and motivation are the key factors preventing many CSOs from being more engaged in the political process.

Scholarship around increasing resources available for advocacy should focus on how CSOs with nonprofit status navigate the U.S. tax code as well as on methods and systems for encouraging foundations and philanthropists to fund advocacy through their grants and donations. The motivation factor requires the most exploration. Even though CSOs consider advocacy to be critically effective, they engage in it with a remarkably low level of frequency. Scholars and practitioners should consider ways to help CSOs feel more connected to the policy arena and more comfortable advocating for change on a systemic level.

*ii. The Citizen Sector Outside of the U.S*

While research around the citizen sector is often concentrated in the U.S., the sector itself is highly developed around the world. CSOs play a huge role in developed and developing countries alike, and this role is incredibly diversified among different societies and cultures. CSOs are founded to meet the particular needs of a society, and they fill countless niches in different places around the world. While this diversity makes it incredibly difficult to generalize about CSO activity on a global scale, a deeper investigation of the similarities and differences of CSOs operating in different countries and contexts has the potential to shed a good deal of insight on the sector.

In particular, my investigation of CSO advocacy could have interesting extensions for newly democratizing nations. CSOs are often known as a base for revolutionary activism in such situations, but they also have a critical role to play in building democratic structures. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, it is not majority voting that allows democratic countries to adopt peaceful change processes on a community level but rather the broader liberal governance structure, which can only be developed by citizens engaged in the work of community building.

*iii. Justice and Peace Studies in Everyday Life*

The discipline of peace studies has a long and significant history of tackling the challenges of societies threatened by the destructiveness of violent conflict. This research is extremely important and the challenge of ending large-scale war and violence in the world is one of the critical tasks of my generation and those to follow. However, the usefulness of justice and peace studies also extends beyond this window. There is a need to explore the ways in which conflict and change are managed by everyday actors in non-crisis situations. Many societies in the world, the U.S. included, are not experiencing civil wars or domestic insurgencies, but still exhibit entrenched tendencies towards structural violence, inequality, and injustice. It is my hope that the discipline continues to grow in its ability to address the challenges of these societies as well in the years to come.

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