HOUSING ADVOCACY AND POLITICAL CHANGE: AN INTERVIEW CASE

STUDY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Thesis under the direction of Professor William Partridge and Professor Paul Speer

This thesis uses thirteen interviews with low-income housing advocates to place current housing advocacy practice in its historical context of the last 150 years. Historically, housing policy has become more progressive when two conditions are present: one, urban social unrest and, two, professional housing advocacy. However, once major successes were made during the sixties, neoliberal federal policy changes put advocates on the defensive. Analysis of the interviews indicates that preferred strategy of housing policy modification differed along participants' social position and level of investment in the current system, level of outrage, and belief in democratic agency. Four main strategies of advocacy work were found, each differed to the extent it was public as opposed to private. The four strategies were: educating and mobilizing the public, educating public officials, lobbying public officials, and mobilizing private organizations. Advocates most invested in the current system of property relations promoted the least public forms of action, while those on the margins promoted the most public forms of action. Theoretical and practical implications for advocacy, political economics, and democratic theory are discussed.

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One third of the households in Nashville, Tennessee pay over thirty percent of

their income on housing (American Community Survey [ACS], 2004). The majority of

these cost-burdened[1] households earn poverty-level wages and are likely to struggle to

cover their childcare, health, education, and transportation costs (ACS, 2004; Bratt, Stone

& Hartmann, 2006). Nationally, homeownership is at record highs, while the availability

of affordable rental housing is at record lows (Joint Center for Housing Studies at

Harvard University, 2005). Current government programs that increase the availability

of affordable housing barely cover the day-to-day losses of affordable housing units[2]

(Bratt, Stone & Hartmann, 2006).

In Nashville, the Metropolitan Development Housing Agency (MDHA)

administers both federal and local housing programs. The housing agency's primary goal

is to: "Provide decent and affordable housing for lower income households" (MDHA,

2005, p. 72). MDHA is responsible for most affordable housing programs in the city.

However, it aims to decrease the number of "renters with income below 50% of area

median income that are experiencing housing problems" at a rate of 1% a year (MDHA,

2005, p.72). The impact of the city's housing programs pale in comparison to the city's

housing need. A handful of non-profit housing executives, government bureaucrats, civil

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[1] A household is considered cost-burdened if it pays over 30% of its cumulative income
on housing.
[2] See Bratt, Stone and Hartmann (2006) for reasons why an increasing number of
affordable units are lost from the low-income housing market.

rights activists, academics, and homeless activists have realized this and are working together to make the city's housing policy more progressive[3]. These advocates are a contemporary example of local and national housing advocacy that has existed since the Revolutionary War.

This paper aims to achieve three goals. One, in its first section the paper will provide an overview of the history of housing policy change and advocacy over the last 150 years. This historical review is based heavily on Marcuse (2000), Yates (2006), and Orlebeke (2000), with added details from Marcuse and Keating (2006), Drier (2006) and Thompson (2006). Two, the paper will communicate the results of an empirical study of local housing advocates in Nashville, Tennessee. Three, the paper will draw conclusions from the insights gained from the historical and empirical studies, especially in relation to the intersection of advocacy, political economy, and democratic governance.

Housing Advocacy and Policy

There is a long history of social struggles around housing in the United States, from squatters movement through rent strikes and urban riots to current campaigns for national and local "housing trust funds" (de Soto, 2000; Marcuse, 2000; Marcuse & Keating, 2006). This history is split into six overlapping periods since the turn of the 19th century: Industrialization, The Great Depression, The Postwar Boom, The Sixties,

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[3] Throughout this paper the terms "advocate" and "advocacy" are used to refer to any activity that could result in a more progressive housing policy (ie education, direct action, organizing, lobbying etc). See Andrew and Edwards (2004) for their definition of "advocacy" as a catch all term for social movements, interest groups and non-profit organizations working for political change. "Progressive housing policy" is used to refer to interventionist housing policies that ensure more housing opportunities for low-income households.

Neoliberalization, and Current Contexts. Tracing a short history of these periods we see

a growing success of housing activism until 1970, starting at the local level (New York

City was a leader) and then at the federal level (notably during the administrations of

Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson). After 1970, federal responsibility for housing

diminished and moved from the federal government to local jurisdictions and the private

market. Activism during this time aimed to preserve the successes of previous eras,

rather than expand upon them.

Industrialization. Throughout American history, major progressive housing

reform has been preceded by both urban unrest amongst low-income housing users and

increased activity of "housing reformers"[4]. In 1867 four years after the New York City

Draft Riots and two years after the cholera epidemic the New York State legislature

passed the first major housing act in American history (Marcuse, 2000). However, the

most organized housing advocacy during this period was not achieved by those suffering

from the housing conditions of New York City, but by professionals concerned with

"public health…public safety, social peace, immigrant integration, and public order"

(Marcuse, 2000, p. 72). Similarly, the landmark Tenement House Act of 1879 was

preceded by social unrest resulting from the depression of 1873. Activities of housing

reformers led to the creation of 20,000 subsidized units over the last quarter of the 19th

century (Marcuse, 2000). During this period, "There is however little evidence that a

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[4] "Housing reformers" is a term used in the 19th century to describe bourgeois and petit-bourgeois advocates who took issue with the deplorable housing conditions of the poor and sought intervention to improve them for the sake of social order, public health, and humanitarian concern. Following Marcuse (2000), "housing reformers" is used to describe non-grassroots efforts for progressive housing change.

popular movement from below, focusing on housing issues, had any significant influence in producing these reforms" (Marcuse, 2000,p. 73). Rather, progressive changes as a result of fears of an uprising by the underclass, in conjunction with the efforts of well-connected housing reformers.

At the turn of the century New York's poor tenants began to organize against landlords rather than government (which, at this time, was not held responsible for housing shortages). An increasing shortfall of housing stock allowed landlords to raise rents and evict poorer tenants. Tenants responded with rent strikes and gained support from the Socialist Party and progressive Jewish labor unions (Marcuse, 2000). During the First World War, when housing shortages became "catastrophic" and landlords used these circumstances to drive up revenues aggressively, the Socialist Party played a large role in organizing resistance (Marcuse, 2000). Fear of domestic uprising during wartime led city and state officials to legislate for greater protections for tenants. After the war ended the Socialist Party disintegrated as a result of the first Red Scare, and the momentum for housing rights was lost until the Great Depression.

In sum, progressive housing policies were predominantly enacted through professional housing reform movements and fear of social unrest through the late 1800s. During industrialization tenant organizing evolved slowly and left a mark only after 1900. However, housing advocacy went dormant with the dissolution of the Socialist party and the good economic circumstances during the 1920s.

The Great Depression. With approximately one-quarter of the workforce unemployed in 1933, landlords faced a growing number of tenants who were unable to

pay rent, which led to a growing number of evictions and resistance to the evictions (Marcuse, 2000; Yates, 2006). Neighbors would spontaneously gather to protect tenants from eviction. The Communist Party, Unemployed Councils, and embedded social networks in black communities played a key role in organizing against landlords (Marcuse, 2000; Yates, 2006). While at first the organizers focused on tenant-landlord action, the Communist Party shifted their focus to the state's responsibility for housing provision. Concurrently, the housing reform movement was gaining strength under the guidance of Catherine Bauer (Hoffman, 2000). Despite an initial hesitancy, the highly influential labor movement eventually joined Bauer's coalition (the carpenters union was an important ally for Bauer). President Roosevelt had not supported public housing provisions in the New Deal reforms of his first term. However, he was swayed by the combination of urban unrest and the development of a powerful housing reform coalition. Roosevelt supported the Housing Act of 1937. This Act marked the first permanent foray of the federal government into the provision of housing. However, support wavered during the conservative backlash of the late thirties (Marcuse & Keating, 2006). During the 1940s public housing received renewed support: at first as a way to house war workers; then as a way to house the returning heroes of the Second World War. Finally, the Housing Act of 1949 was passed and with it a federal mandate to provide "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family".

Several factors combined to bring about this landmark legislation. During the depression and the war that followed it, housing was an immediate concern for many American families. Further, increasing employment through public housing construction was politically popular. Urban militancy, sophisticated organizing, widespread housing

needs, and society's desire for job creation were all powerful forces for the creation of America's public housing. When combined, these forces were able to trump the concerns of the powerful real estate industry, which feared government encroachment into their market.

Post-War Boom. The preceding eras had seen successful housing movements emerge from the combination of government fear of a lower class rebellion and professional advocacy by housing reformers. Rarely had grassroots direct action against the state brought any major changes. Instead, tenant action was generally directed against landlords. Perspectives changed when housing became a federal responsibility in the 1949 Act, and the federal government aimed to construct over 800,000 new units over the next six years. From this point on, government would be the target of nearly all housing activists.

The auspicious 1949 Act was a failure. The Post War Boom is better known for destructive housing policies than for its beneficial ones. In 1960, four years after the 800,000 unit goal was due to be met, less than 200,000 units had been built (Orlebeke, 2000). The notorious Title I provision for urban renewal was of much greater significance than the ambitious public housing development goal contained in Title III of the 1949 Act. Urban renewal programs resulted in the demolition of hundreds of minority communities in cities across the country (Hoffman, 2000). This period saw the use of government funds to racialize neighborhoods, with Whites able to purchase newly constructed homes in the suburbs and predominantly Black neighborhoods redirected into the new highly concentrated public housing developments (Denton, 2006). These

developments were the precursor to the mass uprisings of the sixties and left a lasting legacy on the structure of the housing market in metropolitan areas.

Notably absent from federal housing policy debate during the Post War Boom were the two organizations central to the progressive reforms of the thirties and forties: trade unions and the Communist Party. Trade unions focused on the housing cooperative movement in the fifties. The Communist Party, while surviving the first Red Scare, was unable to survive McCarthyism and the second Red. In this vacuum, limited progressive advocacy work occurred.

The Sixties. The segregationist policies of the US government were overturned not by mass public action but through individual court cases. The NAACP played a lead role in supporting these cases (Yates, 2006). It was not until the mid-sixties that a strong grassroots response to institutionalized racism occurred. The urban race riots that swept American cities were directly tied to the deplorable housing circumstances and forced relocation instituted by government policies (Marcuse 2000; Thompson, 2006; Yates, 2006). Direct action against landlords also remerged, with one rent strike in Harlem involved 500 buildings and 15,000 tenants (Marcuse, 2000). The Black Panther Party demanded the government provide access to decent housing for all black and oppressed communities.

While often met with strong government repression, the social movements of the sixties won a number of changes in the way the federal government implemented urban policy. Urban renewal programs were scrapped and replaced with more benign programs for urban investment (Yates, 2006). The Department for Housing and Urban

Development (HUD) was created in 1965 to implement these new programs and to manage public housing programs. Policy began to focus on rehabilitation of units rather than reconstruction and citizen participation was required in comprehensive planning for urban areas. The national unrest that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. led to further housing reforms at the federal level, including the construction of six million new low-income units by 1978. The Nixon administration and HUD embraced this extremely ambitious goal. The federal government supported the development of an unprecedented number of new units in the years leading up to Nixon's 1973 moratorium on government housing production (Orlebeke, 2000).

Of the sixties, Marcuse (2000) writes "To that point, it may plausibly be argued, the proponents of improved housing were on the offensive; after that point, they were rather reacting, defensively, to a deterioration of housing conditions" (p. 79). New heights of government investment in housing were reached. Many important organizations were initiated, including: community development corporations, ACORN, the Center for Community Change, National Congress for Community Economic Development, and the National Tenants Organization. These organizations created a structure to engage in discussion of federal housing policy. The disappointment of the 1949 Act was still fresh. These organizations would help ensure that progressive policies were enacted and monitored for effectiveness. However, they were to have their work cut out for them. National and global changes were occurring, and a progressive federal housing mandate was to become an anathema to the new neoliberalizing agenda.

Neoliberalization. According to Regulation Theory, neoliberalism is the mode of political-economic regulation in today's globalized world (Painter, 2002). Neoliberalism reorganizes the Fordist mode of regulation, which dominated from 1945 to 1980 (Jessop, 2002). Labor power loses its influence on capital (thereby reducing wages for most workers). The nation-state also loses power and authority both upward (e.g. to supranational organizations like WTO and EU) and downward (e.g. to regional and urban governments). Neoliberal policies aim to reduce the role of the nation-state as welfare provider, and to increase the role of the state as market facilitator[5] (Harvey, 2005). The proponents of neoliberalism argue that it increases both market efficiency (and thereby wealth) and individual freedom (Harvey, 2005). However, David Harvey (2005) argues that the true goal of neoliberalism is the consolidation of elite class power.

In a poignantly ironic moment in 1971, President Nixon declared: "We are all Keynesians now." To follow was the collapse of the international monetary system (which Keynes was involved in developing), the oil crisis, and the concomitant rise of the neoclassical-monetarist economic theory of Hayek and Freidman. The social movements of the sixties had advanced housing issues to the point where they finally received major commitments from the federal government. From this point on, housing activists would be fighting to progressive policies against the neoliberal tide. In parallel, the triumph of interventionist federal fiscal policy (as indicated by the Nixon quote above) also marked the beginning of its precipitous decline. These two threads (reduction in support for housing and reduction in fiscal intervention into the economy) came together in their

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[5] Patent law is an example of government facilitation of market forces, as it increases the economic rewards of technological development, and thereby increases technological development.

most extreme form during the early years of the Reagan administration (in his first three

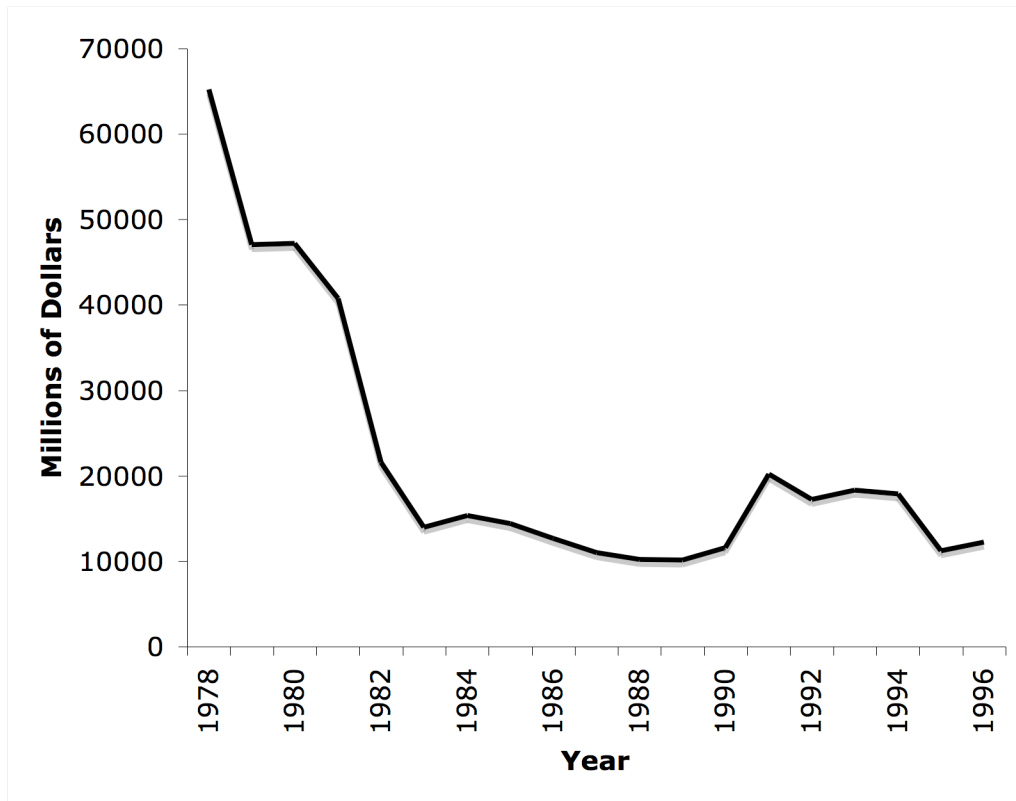years in office, Reagan cut HUD's budget from over $60m to $25m; see Figures 1-3;

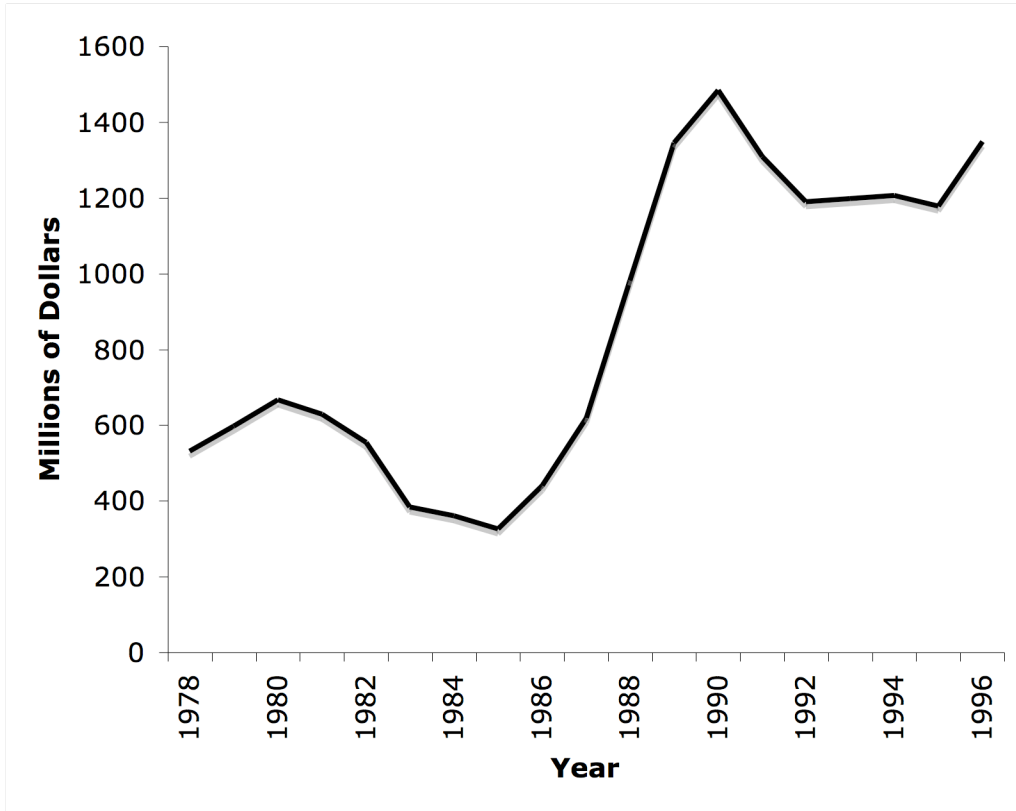Dreier, 2006).

Figure 1. HUD housing subsidies by year.

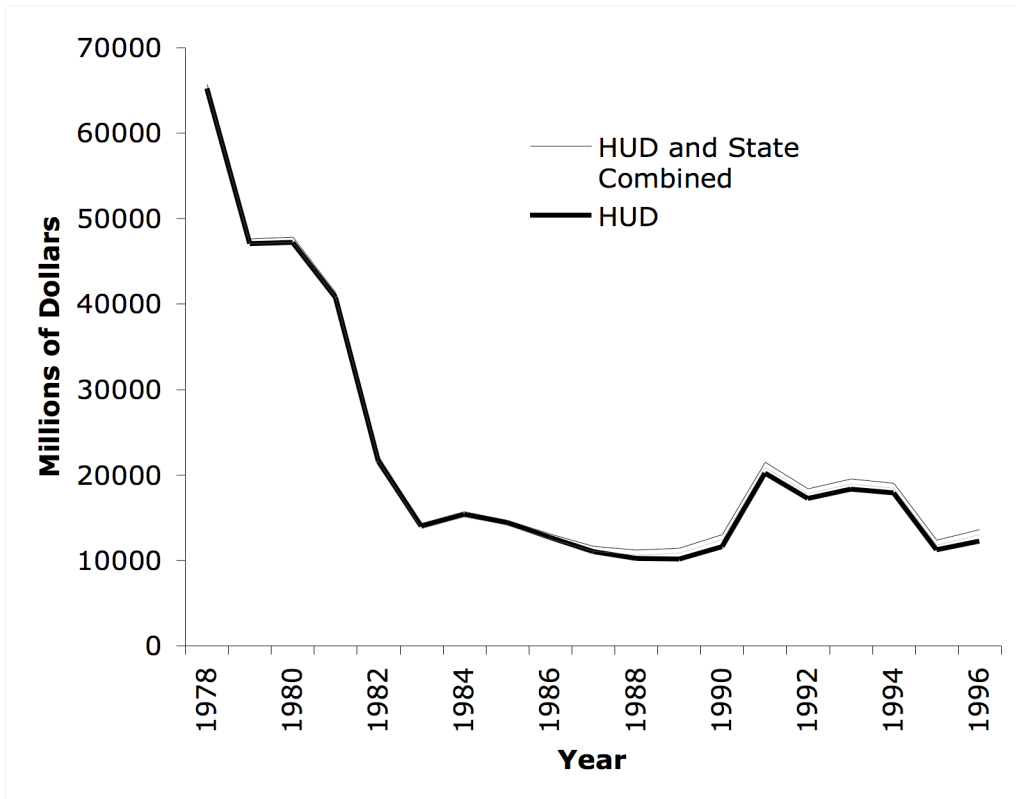*Figure 2*. State housing subsidies by year.

Figure 3. HUD and state housing subsidies by year.

The first major backlash against progressive federal housing policy occurred in 1973 when Nixon declared a moratorium on housing production by HUD. A continuation of the current rate of development (1.6 million new units had been created under his administration to this point) was felt to be prohibitively draining on the federal budget (Orlebeke, 2000). Further, the cost of housing development was going up, highlighting the inflationary role of increased government-sponsored housing demand. Thirdly, adequate inner-city housing was abandoned, indicating that the housing crisis was caused by something other than simple shortage of units (Orlebeke, 2000).

Federal housing policy underwent significant changes in 1974. The Section 8 rental program was created, as was the historic Community Development Block Grant (CDBG; Orlebeke, 2000). Both are now cornerstones of current federal urban policy (Orlebeke, 2000). CDBG turned over development powers and funding to States and localities with unprecedented freedom. This marked a radical change in not just the way HUD did business but was the exemplar that most social programs of the federal government were going to follow in the decades to come (Nathan, 1996).

However, CDBG was not without its problems. Two organizations that grew out of the social movements of the sixties, ACORN and the Center for Community Change, began to monitor of how cities were spending their CDBG money (Yates, 2006). Investigations found that localities were spending as much of the money in high-income neighborhoods as they were in low-income neighborhoods (Nathan, 1996). The program was subsequently retooled to protect it against further misuse (Yates, 2006).

Successful grassroots organizing continued into the mid-seventies. Local victories of organized public housing tenants provided the momentum for the development of the influential National Tenants Organization (NTO) in 1969 (Yates, 2006). Tapping into the skills of civil rights veterans and supported by non-profits, NTO was able to negotiate with HUD for stronger tenant rights that by and large public housing tenants still benefit from (Yates, 2006). The NTO was prominent both in Washington and throughout cities in the early seventies, but like other advances made in the sixties by the end of the seventies it had fallen prey to decreased funding and membership (Marcuse, 2000). Grassroots activism also led to the Housing Mortgage Data Act and Community Reinvestment Act. Under the Carter Administration, the federal government passed strict laws forcing lending institutions to invest money in all the neighborhoods that their depositors lived, not just the most economically robust neighborhoods. Up until that point (and still showing signs of continuing in less significant ways today) banks were "redlining" poor black neighborhoods, refusing to lend money in areas deemed financially unsound by racist logic. A Chicago-based group, Neighborhood Peoples Action (NPA), observed this trend and began collecting data about banking practices. Their initial collection showed definite trends against black neighborhoods and by marshalling this evidence managed to convince the Illinois state legislature to outlaw redlining (Yates, 2006). Under pressure from NPA, ACORN, and other groups, the federal government followed suit and forced banks over a certain size to provide detailed data about their investment practices and face sanctions if shown to be remiss in their community lending. This was a major win for progressive policy advocates, notable for its focus on private sector responsibilities.

Since 1974 federal housing policy has been increasingly neoliberalized. Rental vouchers became the primary focus during the Reagan years, with most other activities being largely defunded (Orlebeke, 2000). Rental vouchers are the favored mechanism of housing subsidy as they do not require the government to manage units. The private landlord maintains responsibility for the unit and the government simply covers the difference between what the renter can afford to pay and the "fair-market rent" of that particular location (Green & Malpezzi, 2003).

The State administered and federal treasury funded Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program was started in 1986. Since that time it has funded the construction of more housing units than any other government program (McClure, 2000. The program subsidizes low-income (at approximately 50% of area median income) rental housing by providing tax credits for large for-profit entities. In effect, large for-profit organizations fund a significant portion of a low-income housing development and then have their expenditure more than compensated through corporate tax deductions. It is a prototypical neoliberal government program: the federal government divorces itself from responsibility, while reducing taxation of very wealthy organizations. The program also strongly supports the third sector. Community Development Corporations are often the developers on LIHTC programs, and accrue significant funding for their organizations in this process.

Following the model of CDBG, the HOME block grant program was created in 1990, dedicated to the development and rehabilitation of affordable housing. Notably, fifteen percent of HOME funds are set aside for local non-profits, strengthening the demand for affordable housing non-profits by $225 million nationally (Marcuse &

Keating, 2006). HOME and LIHTC programs have reshaped the context of low-income

housing development away from government and toward private organizations.

Finally, the controversial HOPE VI program was created in 1993 to help local

housing authorities redevelop dilapidated public housing projects. This was the most

visible effort of the federal government to restructure its previous commitments to public

housing, as it has provisions for privatization of redeveloped units, for reduction in the

number of units, and for mixed income developments (redeveloped units can house

families with incomes above 50% of median income). HOPE VI projects have been noted

to help cities gentrify neighborhoods and reduce local housing authority outlays on

subsidization for extremely poor households (Dreier, 2006).

While the LIHTC, HOME and HOPE VI programs have contributed to devolving

government responsibility and changing the nature of federal responsibility in housing, it

is important to note that they represent some form of financial commitment to the low-

income housing sector. In many ways these programs are ambiguously progressive,

while they often involve increased housing expenditure, they also change the network of

relations between social services, governments, service users, and taxpayers.

Consistently, all new programs since the seventies reduce the responsibility of the federal

government in the housing sector.

A number of scandals have shocked HUD and shaped the federal administration

of community development and housing programs (Thompson, 2006). In 1994 a

Republican majority swept to congress and after four decades of scandals involving the

misuse of tax dollars in federal housing initiatives, HUD was under threat of being

dissolved. Preemptively, HUD promised to change its ways, and lost a large portion of

its staff while remaining the administrator of national housing and urban development programs (which by now were largely devolved to States and local jurisdictions). HUD is still seen as one of the most vulnerable government departments (Dreier, 2006).

Current Contexts. The administration of federal housing programs is still considerably cost-burdened by the financial commitments made in earlier periods (Dreier, 2006). While racist urban policies of the middle of the century have been removed, the legacy of this era still strongly marks the placement, distribution, and finances of housing in contemporary American cities. The sixties provided the momentum for significant and largely progressive federal low-income housing policies. The unrest of the sixties also led to the creation of national low-income housing interests groups. These lobbying, organizing, and educational groups provide the infrastructure for a large professional voice to engage in debates about housing policy. The federal government has supported these groups through its embrace of the non-profitization movement. This has led to a context were most progressive housing organizations are dependent on the meager federal housing subsidies that still exist. The impact of this dependence on community action on housing and community development is debated (see Bratt, 2006; Fisher & Shragge, 2000; Yates, 2006). Concurrent with the institutionalization of housing advocacy, activist responses to housing issues have been largely quelled (Marcuse, 2000). With the exception of mobilization around redlining that led to HMDA and CRA – a highly successful campaign that started in Chicago and which led to first Illinois laws against redlining then second to the Community Reinvestment Act – the sixties were the last major period of housing direct action. Since

Nixon's moratorium there has been a downward trend in federal intervention into the housing market. All federal programs that have come online since the mid-seventies have been marked by neoliberalism and a reshaping of the Fordist compromise: the federal government maneuvering its way out of positions of responsibility for housing and community development, the reduction of focus on the poorest populations, and greater support for private enterprise.

During this period American political leaders have claimed great success in the increased rate of homeownership for all Americans, including Blacks and Hispanics. However, America's poorest families are still largely confined to the rental market and in 2003, 4.5 million extremely low-income households did not have access to the affordable rental housing they needed (Pelletiere, 2006). Between 1991 and 1997, the private market lost 370,000 unsubsidized units affordable to extremely low income households (Bratt, Stone, & Hartmann, 2006). Further, since the late 1980s, 200,000 publicly subsidized units have been lost (Bratt, Stone, & Hartmann, 2006). It is in this context we turn to the rise of housing trust funds and the local effort in Nashville that this study focuses on.

Housing Trust Funds. One of the most substantial movements in recent housing activism is the movement towards housing trust funds (HTFs). Housing trust funds are an increasingly popular way to support the expansion of low income housing, as they can be locally driven and financed and can circumvent problems associated with federal housing policy over the last fifty years. Housing trust funds involve cities or States dedicating a stream of pubic revenue to the creation of low-income housing. The first

local and state housing trust funds began in the early eighties, paralleling Reagan's cuts

to federal housing programs (Connerly, 1993). Since then, housing trust funds have

become increasingly more popular ways of responding to the housing problems of

locales. In fact, over the last seven years the number of housing trust funds in the U.S.

has doubled, with almost 600 now in existence (Brooks, 2007). The programs supported

by HTFs vary widely. First time home buyer programs, rental housing vouchers, and

homeless shelter provisions have all been supported by housing trust funds in different

locations. Ideally, differences in HTFs reflect the specific needs of localities, rather than

just the interests of the most influential parties involved in the creation of the fund.

However, there are many reasons to be cynical about how progressive HTFs really are.

In an early study, Connerly (1993) finds that housing trust funds contributions do not

come close to making up for the federal support for housing that was lost during the

Regan-Bush administrations. Further, housing trust fund programs are less likely to serve

families who need it most, with income targeting less focused than Section 8 and public

housing (Connerly, 1993).

The present research involves members of an advocacy group working for the

creation of a local housing trust fund in Nashville. A brief overview of the history of the

group will be given. First however we turn to the literature of advocacy organizations.

Non-Housing Advocacy

This section looks at the key points raised in Andrews and Edwards' (2004)

review of the advocacy literature. Their review shows that the growth of housing

advocacy organizations is not distinctive to housing, and reflects a larger trend in the

political landscape since the 1960s. The cause of the nationwide growth of advocacy

organizations has been debated widely. Hypotheses include: increased social instability,

increased societal affluence (and thereby resources to mobilize with), increased

opportunities within the political system to mobilize, and a rise of postmaterial values and

social legitimization of advocacy work in society.

Andrews and Edwards (2004) find that advocacy for concerns of privileged

groups are the most common, while advocacy for minority and disenfranchised groups

are, not surprisingly, rather sparse. Educated, middle class individuals are more likely to

respond to the membership solicitations of advocacy groups, resulting in higher

participation rates of this demographic. This could partially explain why the housing

reform movement is more visible than grassroots housing movements over the last

century and a half of housing advocacy. The consequences of different organizational

forms are debated. Employing professional staff may undermine participatory tactics,

however, professional staff have also been found to increase participation, promote

organizational longevity and facilitate networking. It has been argued in the literature

that the gains of social movements have been consolidated by professional advocacy

institutions. This is apparent in history of housing advocacy with the successes of CDBG

monitoring and CRA legislation. Advocate networks are important to access community

resources. Research findings suggest that homophily (similar individuals grouping

together in isolation) leads to lowered access to resources.

Andrews and Edwards (2004) argue that success of advocacy organization can be

considered in five different domains: agenda setting, access to decision-making arenas,

achieving favorable policies, monitoring and shaping implementation, and shifting long-

term priority areas and resources of political institutions. These domains will be returned to in the discussion of results of the present study. It is to this present context that we now return.

History of Local Housing Advocacy

In the early nineties, local community leaders organized to start a local national congregation-based community organizing affiliate in Nashville: the Nashville Community Alliance (NCA). In 1999, affordable housing became one of the six issues the NCA found most important to its members. It developed a housing action team and began to set housing goals for local government to meet. Their efforts met with some success. The Mayor promised to develop 30,000 new affordable housing units over the next ten years, and to create a Mayor's Office of Affordable Housing. The mayor set aside $1 million a year for these activities. However, some members of the research action team were not satisfied with the type of affordable housing supported by the mayor, and wanted to pursue the issue further. Unfortunately, the housing action team was disbanded by the NCA when it shifted organizational focus in 2002. HAC, the Housing Affordability Coalition, was a local loosely structured group formed in the wake of the dissolution of the housing action team. The core members decided to continue their housing advocacy work and for three years attempted to get a better understanding of Nashville's housing needs and the impact of public housing rehabilitation projects on the residents who were displaced by HOPE VI projects. HAC worked with several government agencies, including the local housing authority, the recently created Mayor's Office of Affordable Housing, and the Planning Department to put together this data on

local housing needs. Most of their efforts were resisted and the group was unable to acquire data through the city government. HAC changed its approach, and began to focus on the creation of a local housing trust fund. The group decided to push for a local HTF. The key members of the group contacted two professors to provide help in gathering information about housing trust funds and why one was needed in Nashville. At this stage three graduate students and two faculty of a local university became heavily involved in the process. A decision was made to invite a national expert on HTFs from the Center for Community Change to the city and have two major events. The first was a planning meeting with key community members to create a proposal for a HTF. The second was a larger meeting where the case for a local housing trust fund was presented. A professor and graduate student (the author) presented local housing data at the second event. Significant momentum had been gained by the public event and there was energy to continue the process. Three committees were formed to work on revenue generation, administration and expenditure of the proposed housing trust fund. In this phase, participation by other community members increased as the restructuring created new roles to be filled. Groups met every three weeks and discussed issues relevant to their particular focus (revenue, administration, or expenditure). A steering committee that helped coordinate the activities of committee. Key participants in this process were interviewed for this study.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The interviews involved a total of 17 participants in 13 interviews. All but two

interviewees were directly involved in the local coalition for a housing trust fund. The

two not involved were prominent individuals involved in city planning and housing

issues in Nashville. All interviews were conducted by the author. All interviews were

individual but one, a group interview with four participants. The interviews took place in

the participants' offices bar two, which took place at local bars. The interviews occurred

between June, 2006 and February, 2007. Participants were selected through their

centrality to the housing trust fund campaign as well as their different employment/role in

the community. The majority of participants were white males (11), the rest of the

participants included four black males, two black females and one white female.

Participants included homeless and formerly homeless advocates, non-profit executives,

real estate brokers, urban design consultants, church leaders, university faculty and

graduate students, and government employees.

Interviews

The questions were developed to gauge interviewee involvement in housing

advocacy, their understandings and ethical evaluation of the housing market, their role in

the present HTF effort, and their understanding of what effective advocacy would entail

during this particular period. The interviews were carried out in an informal

conversational manner as in all but one circumstance the researcher had worked with the

interviewee previously on the HTF campaign. Both the participant and the interviewer

often carried the interview to other topics seeming relevant to the research question and

the housing trust fund effort. Often participants would ask questions about the

interviewer and these would be responded to. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and

two hours (typical interview lasted 45mins).

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes first on paper printouts of

transcripts then using NVIVO 2 software program. The coding was done under the guide

of constructivist grounded theory as laid out by Charmaz (2006). Key emergent themes

were role of government, role of private sector, ethical evaluations[6], and advocacy

practice. All passages relating to advocacy practice were coded along six dimensions:

type of action (e.g. lobbying), target of that action (e.g. councilperson), level of action

(local, state, or federal), temporality of action (past, present, future), efficacy of action

(resisted, successful, unknown), and whether that action related to enacting an HTF or

advocacy in general. The interrelationships between these six dimensions were explored,

and then further examined in relation to particular participants. To facilitate analysis,

role of government, private sector, and ethical evaluations were assessed along four

scales: critical of government housing policy, sense of injustice about current market

conditions, use of economic explanation of market conditions, and belief that democratic

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[6] "Ethical evaluations" refer to the participants' conceptualization of how far the current
housing supply departs from their ideal housing market supply.

agency could lead to more progressive housing policy. These were rated along a three-point ordinal scale: not present, weakly present, and strongly present. Social position and investment came out of the analysis as an important is denoted by a scale of marginality[7] (a combination of social marginality and level of investment). This was a seven point scale with seven the most marginal, zero the most central. Social marginality was rated positive for Black, female, not employed, not employed in housing. Participant's level of investment was rated along a four point scale for the amount of local government/for-profit support: minimal, moderate, major, and complete. There were two reasons why it seemed sensible to combine government and for-profit affiliations. One, while they have many differences, each has a political interest in current housing conditions having a positive appearance. Two, the extent of affiliation with either seemed to have similar impact across the patterns of relations described above. Social marginality and level of investment were combined for the scale of marginality.

Exploration of relationships occurred through a variety of forms. First, using the Boolean search function in NVIVO 2, frequency of intersection between each dimension of advocacy was carried out (e.g. frequency each activity code occurring with each target code). These were then imported into Excel and histograms were created for each to illustrate relative frequencies. Then (using the Boolean search function), frequency tables were developed for each participant and each code of each dimension of advocacy. Using NVIVO model generator each activity node and target node was mapped out in relation to each other and groups were formed. This led to the development of the four

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[7] It would be preferable to include race gender and occupational position separately, however this could lead to the identification of particular participants and their views. Instead a scale of marginality is used.

key categories of activities: raising awareness, lobbying, organizing and non-advocacy related activities (discarded for this analysis). Strength of connections between each activity and each target were visually displayed, as were the links between each participant and each target and activity. The patterns of relations suggested certain participant factors were influencing preferences (e.g. race and employment in housing market, most notably). These patterns were then explored using a comparative analysis of pathways (which factors led to which advocacy strategies). From this analysis the final model was developed.

Trustworthiness

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) outline qualitative techniques that reassure the reader that research findings are trustworthy. Several of these techniques were present in this study, including: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member checking, peer debriefing, and purposive sampling. The researcher was in the field for over a year having biweekly interactions with most participants this allowed for: the building of trust, rapport, and relationships between researcher and participants; and the gathering of data that was accurate and of wide scope. Further, this prolonged engagement facilitated persistent observation. During interviews the researcher was able to understand the commentary of most participants in terms of their actions within a larger group and check for any inconsistencies in reporting, this also facilitated getting more in-depth data from participants because of a background of shared understanding. In all interviews, the researcher attempted to clarify what advocates were reporting. The process of clarification in interviews ensured that member checking did occur during the

interview process. The researcher had regular debriefing sessions with his supervising professor as well as colleagues also working in the site. These debriefing sessions allowed for the researcher's understandings to be challenged and rethought in light of sound questioning. Finally, maximum variation purposive sampling allowed ensured a range of different perspectives to be included in the research. Further enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings, the sample size, although relatively small, included the vast majority of those most involved in housing advocacy in the city. This means, that while theoretical saturation was not achieved (Charmaz, 2006), most of the city's target population was in the sample.

In light of this, the findings lay out a well-founded grounded hypothesis that calls for further investigation, both with a larger sample (perhaps expanding to other cities), and with a different target population (other types of advocates, or the general population).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Advocacy involves three core activities: organizing, raising awareness and

lobbying. It also involves three core targets of these activities: the general public, public

officials, and other organizations. From these two dimensions (activity and target) five

key processes can be derived from the interviews: internal organizing of the advocacy

group, raising awareness of the general public, raising awareness of public officials,

lobbying public officials and organizing private organizations. These activities (within

ellipses), targets (rectangles), and key processes (arrows) are depicted in Figure 4 (with

the exception of internal organizing, as the target is the group itself). In this figure line

thickness denotes relative frequency, and arrow width denotes relative frequency.

Further analysis finds systematic differences between participants in their evaluation of

effective advocacy processes. These differences consisted of: evaluation of current

housing market and policy, belief in the potential of democratic agency to result in more

progressive housing policy, and social position and degree investment in the housing

system.

All participants focused on local advocacy work (105 of 118 passages regarding

advocacy were classified as specifically local, rather than state or federally targeted).

Participants who were more heavily involved in the housing trust fund (HTF) effort

spoke more about advocacy that specifically related to the HTF rather than advocacy in

general. Otherwise, there were no major systematic differences between what was

classified HTF focused and what was classified as general advocacy focused in the coding process. Interviewees talked about advocacy work that happened in the past, was currently happening and that which should (or should not) happen in the future in relatively equal proportions.

Organizing

Organizing came in two main forms, that which is more internally focused (group structure, process, planning, leadership, focus and political awareness) and that is more focused on outside organizations (building coalitions and gaining resources). Internally, those most heavily involved in the HTF effort noted the importance of **organizational structure**[8] in the campaign and it was noted how this will be a necessary part of future efforts. This was often connected to the role of the graduate students involved in the housing trust fund campaign, who were responsible for meeting agendas, minutes and other essential organizing tasks. The university research group had developed a keen interest in **group process** and so I often asked interviewees about their perspective on it (rarely did it come up unasked for). Advocates noted the difficulty in having meetings with so many different groups present, it was felt that each constituency present had a tendency to look out for their own interests. However, there was generally a positive appraisal of the process so far: "I feel as if this is a good group otherwise I wouldn't be involved." **Strategic planning** to achieve advocacy goals is intuitively an important part of political advocacy, but surprisingly, it was only directly referred to by one person.

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[8] Boldface font indicates code-label. All relevant code-labels are displayed in Figure 1.
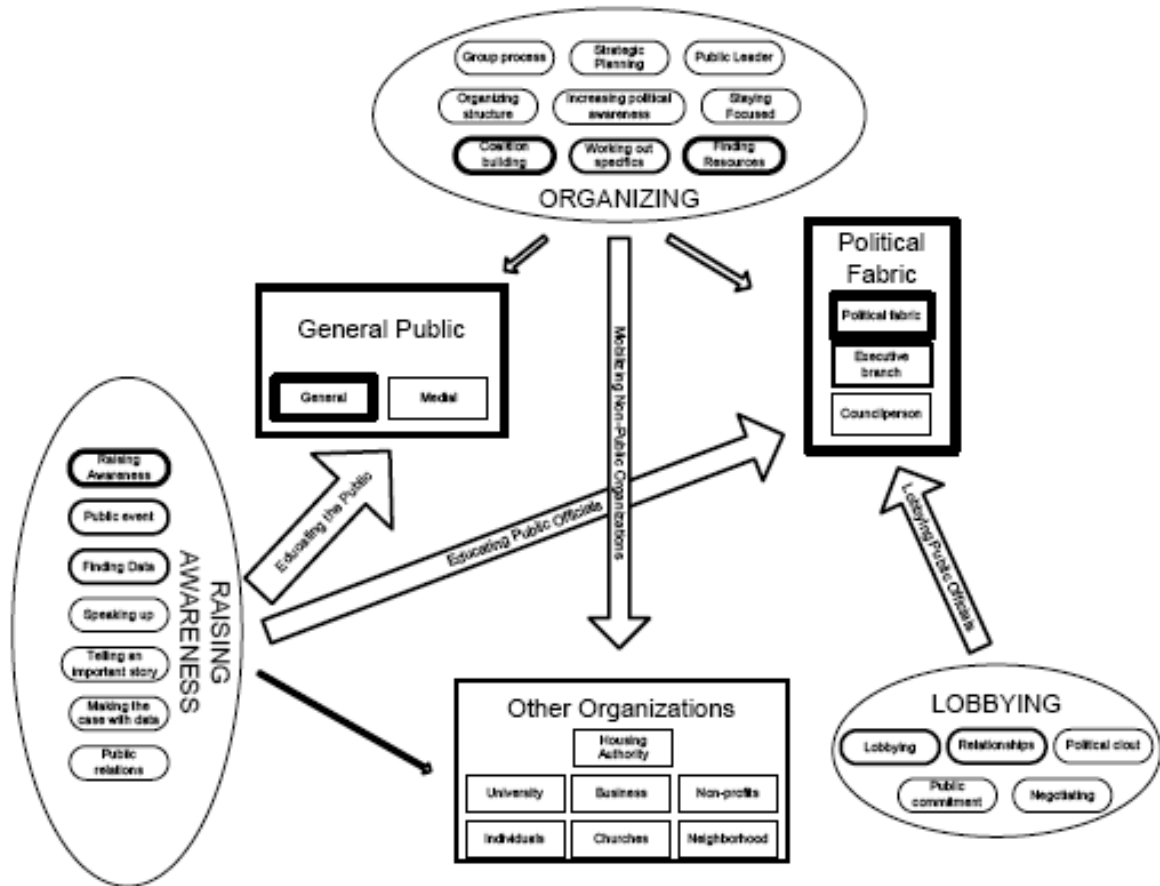
Figure 4: Activities, Targets and Processes in Housing Advocacy

Working out the **specifics** of policy objectives (how much money do we want? for what? where from? how will it be dispensed? what are the legal issues?) was brought up by politically entrenched advocates. Two of these advocates, who had experience negotiating policy decisions also cited the importance of having a **public leader**. Others, with less experience, thought that a well-coordinated group did not necessarily need a public leader. **Staying focused** on goals over the long term was also mentioned as crucial for the creation of a housing trust fund. **Increasing political awareness**, getting to know the political landscape, is "hard to do without years of experience" but you have

to "find out exactly how the government relationships work because at the end of the day that does determine who gets what". "Its really been up to all of us to figure out the political process for you know for the past year or more. And you know, we're learning what it takes, but I think its been a gradual learning process." Utilizing sympathetic public officials as informants is a frequently cited way of achieving this. As the coalition develops it sees this awareness as being crucial for the future of the effort.

Coalition building was the most frequent aspect of the HTF effort discussed. It offered hope for the future as it led to political power and did not seem too difficult to accomplish. Churches and non-profits came up as key groups to involve in the coalition. Some interviewees also saw potential in the for-profit sector, including developers, and the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. One of the more embedded individuals talked about getting the major stakeholders (medical establishment, universities, major philanthropists) in the community involved, rather than just those with an interest in housing. While another, with more faith in grassroots democratic process, felt that it was important to organize individual citizens to call their local councilperson to support particular policies. Importantly, interviewees did not discuss the importance of having more representation from individuals affected by housing issues to build a more grassroots coalition. **Finding resources** is a key activity for a community coalition to achieve its goal, and was brought up by over half of the interviewees. But surprisingly, was not mentioned by the most long standing members of the Housing Affordability Coalition (HAC). Those who brought it up did so in terms of the financial resources and expertise that supports the coalition, but also in terms of the symbolic value that results from having other institutions buy into the advocacy effort.

Raising Awareness about Housing Needs

Over a third of all advocacy passages coded focused on raising awareness. As can be seen in Figure 4, most of these focused on the general public, but a significant minority focused on public officials. There were no notable differences between educative efforts focusing on general public and those focusing on public officials. **Making the case with data** has been the central focus of one of the key members of HAC over the last several years. Many long-term HAC members are satisfied with the numbers they have to support their argument for efforts to increase the housing supply, and no advocates feel like it is an important part of their future work. HAC's early efforts to **find data** were blocked by the **political fabric**[9]. This resistance by those in power to provide access to data suggests that data may be a powerful tool for advocates.

Advocates know that only a minority of the population is suffering dearly from inadequate housing opportunities. For this reason, it is important to craft a narrative that brings home the needs of people underserved in the housing market to those who are not suffering. **Telling important stories** is a way to achieve this. Some advocates believe that a convincing story can be told, and, that people can be convinced to make sacrifices for it. Others think that it is imperative that the story of suffering is told, while not being optimistic about its chances of making housing policy more progressive. However, there are some advocates who report it being effective in the past. While middle class advocates talk about the importance of crafting a story, those most affected by housing shortages focus on **speaking up.** For those individuals aversely affected by the housing

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[9] Political fabric was the generalized code that was used during analysis. In the rest of this paper public officials will be used interchangeably with political fabric.

market, having the opportunity to voice their own experiences is a powerful tool and outcome in advocacy work.   These individuals are less concerned with professional **PR**, and more focused on having a chance to sit at the decision making table. Hiring a public relations firm was brought up repeatedly by long time middle class advocates and, for them, a highly esteemed mechanism for policy change. **Raising awareness** is both a means and ends to housing advocates. The paucity of understanding of housing issues is itself an issue to overcome and a major accomplishment when achieved. **Public events** are viewed as an important mechanism to surmount this issue and past events are often considered "watershed moments" in campaigns. In fact, many of those interviewed only became part of the organizing group after the major event in June, 2006.

Lobbying – Personal Engagement with Power Brokers

　　　　Those most embedded and those most excluded from the housing market do not talk about the importance of engagement with political decision makers. However, everyone in between does. It is widely thought that this personal engagement with decision makers is something that the HTF campaign has going for it: "The people that are involved have the ear of the people that make decision." **Relations** with decision makers is a highly regarded way to exert influence at the local and state level. In fact, "unless you've got something like this in the political fabric, helping create and sustain something like this is almost impossible." The groups "new ideas" and "well placed volunteers" can be used as leverage to get public officials to "play ball". This process is different than simply raising awareness, as illustrated by the following quote: "But I've learned to, to be careful how I share information because it can hurt….And so I just have

to show patience and just continue doing what I do. And um encouraging people who are looking at me [to] sharing some money."   However, only three interviewees explicitly saw political **lobbying** as a key process in advocacy work. The group is regarded as having some **political clout** from its membership, and this is seen as a boon for the group's efforts. Influencing decision makers who are motivated by more than just housing concerns, necessarily involves **negotiating** with them and recognizing what is negotiable and not-negotiable for the group of advocates. However, in the past negotiating has ended up with less than ideal outcomes for housing advocates, so there is some skepticism about it. Ideally, a **public commitment** by public officials is the major goal of those lobbying to make a change.

Outcomes

The results of this study showed participants promote four main types of public action: educating and mobilizing the general public, educating public officials[10], lobbying public officials, and mobilizing private organizations. Educating and mobilizing the public is the most public and most contentious as it involves the potential of making public officials look bad to their constituencies.

> … what I still see as the available solution to our housing concerns – the only
>
> thing that bothers me is the general population as a whole are not as educated, you
>
> know, about affordable housing – … you need somebody … to really put it out to
>
> the public and better break it down to the public for the public to understand how
>
> they benefit. (Advocate F).

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[10] "Public officials" is used as a more specified term than the originally coded "political fabric".

Educating public officials is considered slightly less contentious as it only raises the awareness of a select group of individuals, but it still carries with it a sense of ethical evaluation that may have a destabilizing effect on the status quo of current policy practice.

> People who care about this have to stay involved, and they have to keep paying attention to what the council's doing, and they have to keep educating every batch of new candidates. (Advocate K)

Lobbying public officials is differentiated from educating as it does not assume a change in the level of awareness will result in a change of practice, instead it assumes that public officials are sources of power that have to be negotiated with and will do things according to their own best interest, rather than the best interests of the general public. This is exemplified in the following quote:

> … and by education I don't know that we 're going to be able to make them [public officials] think this is the most important issue, but if we can make them feel like they personally are going to get something out of this issue, like its going to bring their name up in lights or its going to help [public official] get elected mayor, that's what I would focus on. (Advocate H)

Organizing non-public organizations is the least public of all political actions as organizing private groups is subject to limited public oversight (whereas even lobbying has to follow specific legal forms).

> I think that in terms of the business community, the … foundations…, the different sectors of our economy, maybe the universities or … the medical complexes, you know, all those types of things. All those types of folks, I think I

think those are the folks that, that really need to see that it's [a housing trust fund] important [in order for a housing trust fund to happen]. (Advocate L)

The findings suggest that there are systematic differences between participants and their promotion of specific policy actions. The different participant attributes that impacted preference for types of action are: evaluation of current housing market and policy, belief in the potential of democratic agency to result in more progressive housing policy, and social position and degree investment in the housing system. Table 1 denotes the strength of preference for particular activities, targets, and processes, as well as the three participant attributes predicting preference.

Evaluation of Current Market

Participants agreed about three things: current opportunities for homeownership were good, existing homeowners were doing well, but opportunities for low-income renters were limited. Not surprisingly, given that I was interviewing advocates, all felt that there should be something done to improve the availability of low-income rental. However, there were differences between participants' perceptions of how unjust and difficult the current housing market was for low-income people. Some participants spent much of the interview discussing the decreasing opportunities for individuals already marginalized by society ("need is increasing and unmet for the people who are lower income"), while others only mentioned lack of housing affordability in passing ("it is an issue… but certainly not a crisis like other cities have"). Participants also differed in the extent that they discussed the housing market in terms of private market forces. Some participants talked at length about the role played by private forces determining the

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Table 1
Participant characteristics, targets, activities and strategies

Partic-ipant	Participant Characteristics					Target			Activities			Strategy
	Critical of Policy	Sense of Injustice	Economic Focus	Belief in Agency	Marginality	Public Officials	General	Other	Raising Awareness	Lobbying	Organizing	Primary Focus
A	Strong	Strong	None	Strong	7	None	Strong	None	Strong	Weak	None	EG
B	Strong	Strong	None	Strong	7	None	Strong	None	Strong	None	None	EG
C	Weak	Weak	Weak	None	6	None	None	Weak	None	Weak	Strong	-
D	Strong	Strong	Weak	None	6	Weak	None	Weak	None	Weak	Weak	-
E	Strong	Strong	None	Strong	6	None	Strong	Weak	Strong	None	None	EG
F	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	5	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	None	EG
G	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	4	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	EP
H	None	Weak	Weak	None	3	Strong	None	Weak	None	Strong	Weak	LP
I	None	Weak	Weak	Strong	2	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong	None	Strong	EP
J	None	None	Weak	Weak	2	Weak	Strong	Weak	None	Weak	Strong	O
K	None	None	Strong	Strong	1	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	EP
L	None	None	Strong	None	0	None	None	Strong	None	None	Weak	O
M	None	None	Strong	None	0	None	None	Strong	Strong	None	None	O

Note. EP: Educate Public, EG: Educate Government (Public Officials), LP: Lobby Public Officials, O: Other Organizations.

current supply of housing in the city, and the concomitant financial constraints in the development of affordable housing. While others saw housing provision only in terms of housing needs, and held government and non-profits accountable for the current lack of low-income rental units. Finally, there were differences between participants in terms of how they evaluated government housing programs. Some cited the effectiveness of Section 8, LIHTC, and public housing programs. While others talked a length about government empty promises and the ineffectual (sometimes detrimental) nature of the policies carried out. Participants who were white and employed professionally in housing were less likely to talk about the injustice of the current market, were more likely to talk about the role of the private market, and more likely to talk about the benign nature of government programs. Similarly those that were not employed housing put more emphasis on the injustice existing in the housing market. All African-American advocates were critical of government interventions into the housing market (even if employed as housing professionals).

The more negative one's evaluation of the current market, the more likely one is to endorse public education and mobilization, while the more benign one viewed the current market the lower the preference for public action is.

Belief in Democratic Agency

Participant belief in the possibility that democratic action leading to improved housing opportunities was an important factor impacting what advocacy processes the interviewee endorsed. Most participants were optimistic that raising awareness of public

officials and/or the public, policy could be changed for the better. For example,

Advocate I said:

> If they're ten to fifteen people in every council district who contact, who are
>
> willing to and do contact, their councilmen about this issue … it will put him [the
>
> councilmember] in a major bind to go with the lobbyists [who are against a
>
> housing trust fund].

However, several participants lacked confidence in both officials and the general public

as possible conduits for progressive changes.

> You don't get the discussion on what's best for the whole community…. [Our]
>
> collective needs really aren't met. Um, because we have this individual power
>
> and the individual power is so manipulated that… it scares individual council
>
> members… and I think that we're actually worse off for it... there's no
>
> compromise. (Advocate J)

For those lacking confidence in the possibility of change, their discussion of advocacy

focused on the internal aspects of organizing and the necessity to gain support of other

private organizations. As mentioned above, some participants noted the self-interested

nature of public officials and how they would only support things that benefited

themselves. Others noted the same tendency in the general public; with the majority

owning their own homes, support for housing policy reform would be minimal[11]. While

those most involved in the housing market were less likely to have faith in democratic

procedures improving policy, this belief was held (although less frequently) at all social

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[11] Democratic agency would also be limited by individuals with a neoliberal perspective,
believing that public intervention would only create inefficiencies in the market, however
no interviewees directly vocalized such a belief explicitly. This is not surprising given
that the sampling criteria was for advocates in the housing market.

positions. As advocates have increasing faith (reliance) in democratic agency they are more likely to use more public modes of advocacy work.

Social Position and Investment in Housing System

Advocates' social position, as determined by their race, class, gender and occupation, was the major factor predicting type of advocacy work supported. The more embedded in the housing system a participant was, the less likely they were to focus on public advocacy. One's investment in the housing system can be theoretically determined by whether they are more likely to benefit from the current system of property relations. Unequal distribution of property between blacks and whites and between women and men, would suggest that white males would have more invested in the current system than females or African-Americans. Those employed in housing professions are also likely to have more invested in the current system than those who do not. Individuals working in government or real estate would have the most invested in the status quo, while non-profit housing developers would be less invested than real estate agents, but more than those who do not receive any of their income from the current system of housing production. As mentioned above, social position was often inversely related to sense of injustice in the housing market, and those who were most firmly embedded had less faith in democratic agency. The more one was entrenched in the current housing system, the less likely they were to support public advocacy activities.
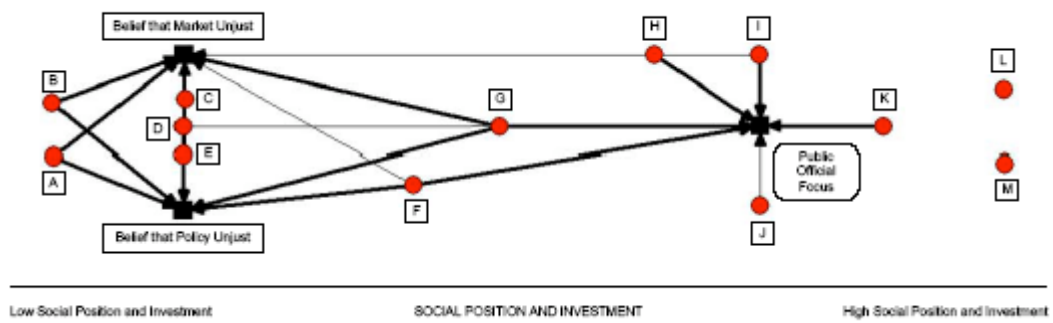
Figure 5. Relationship between negative market evaluation, focus on political fabric, and social position.

As can be seen in Figure 5, one of the variables involved in two of the advocacy processes – focus on public officials – is positively related to social position and investment in the housing market. In Figure 6 the scale at the bottom changes to preference for more public forms of action, and the arrows denote belief in democratic agency direction of effect. These arrows show the tendency of each advocate to endorse more or less public strategies. In both figures thick lines denote strong connections between participant and idea, thin lines denote weak connections, no line denotes no relationship.
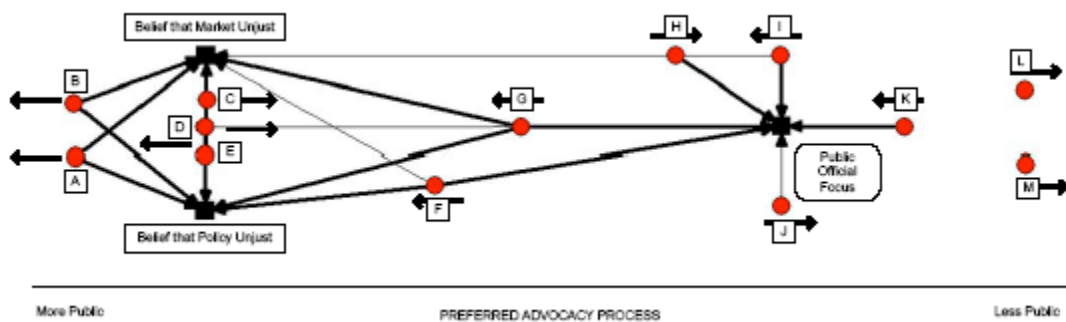

Figure 6. Participants' preferred advocacy process.

Figure 7 denotes the relationship between participant characteristics and endorsed

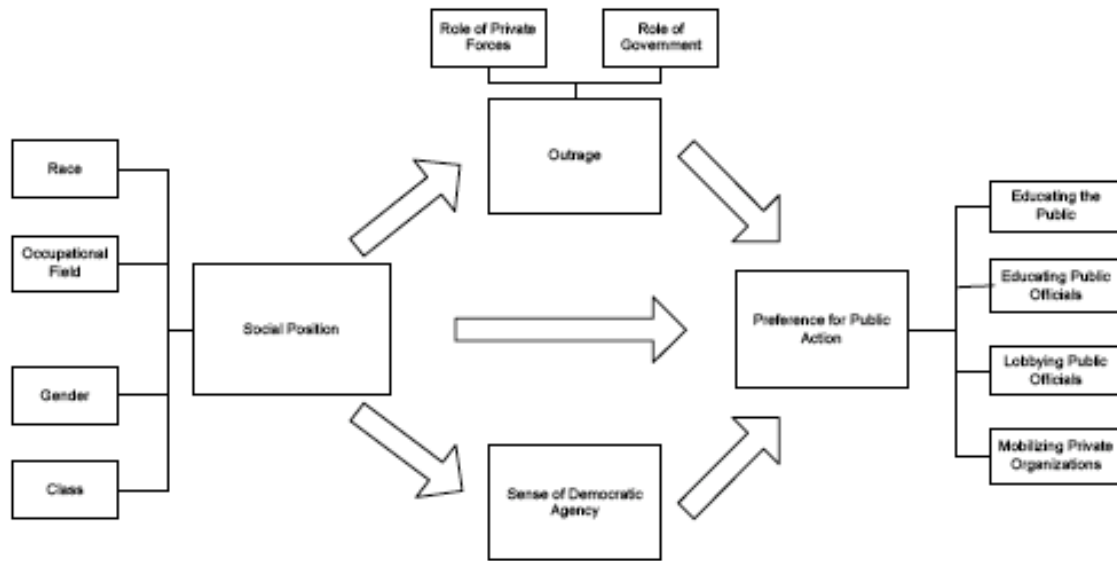advocacy process. This model explains the relationships shown above.

Figure 7. Theoretical model predicting type of public action given social position, outrage and belief in democratic agency.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The recent history of housing advocacy has seen an increasing trend toward institutionalized, nationally-supported advocacy groups as well as increasing levels of local advocacy for housing trust funds. Generally, advocacy has been led by middle class professionals (housing reformers), but has been most successful in conjunction with strong demands from the grassroots. Housing policy was a responsibility of localities and private entities during industrialization. It moved to the federal level during the middle of the twentieth century but once again falls to local jurisdictions and private markets. This is acutely seen in the federally supported but locally controlled HOME, CDBG, and LIHTC programs, as well as in the growing number of locally supported housing trust funds.

Nashville's movement for progressive housing policy was examined through interviews with key participants. Results suggest that there are five main processes in housing advocacy. The first, a focus on organizing the group was related to the level of involvement in the campaign. The four other processes, focusing on general public, politicians, and private organizations, were to a large extent predicted by social position and level of investment in the current system, level of outrage, and belief in democratic agency. Three salient findings are worth further discussion: participants' exclusive focus on local government intervention, role of social position on participant advocacy strategy choice, and participants' understanding of democratic processes.

Localized Government-Focused Advocacy

The current focus on government is a product of the housing advocacy successes of the middle of the twentieth century. The expansion of government housing services was the result hard fought battles during the Great Depression and the sixties. The government housing sector, while far from ideal, has subsidized millions of units, serving some of the country's most disadvantaged families since the Housing Act of 1937. While maintaining a government focus, contemporary advocates have followed the federal government's lead and pressure local authorities for more funding. While this has resulted in significant local successes across the country, Connerly (1993) has pointed out the limitations of these successes. There were problems tied to federal support of low-income housing (HUD has one of the worst reputations of all government departments). Still, there are notable consequences of focusing on local level programs. On the hopeful side, as local interventions become more established and draw down more resources, perhaps they will be able to match the impact of the federal programs during the 1970s. Further, the local nature of these programs may result in more effective use of expenditures and yield greater results for those who need it most. However, many commentators have noticed that local jurisdictions are more susceptible to powerful interest groups than the federal government (Davis, 2006). This raises the likelihood that local programs will benefit the more influential members of the community rather than those who need it most. Finally, it is important to note that local options for generating revenues are severely constrained. Dreier (2006) may be right in his assertion that "Only

federal government has the resources to address the problem" of low-income housing (p. 129).

The impact of federal government support of the non-profit sector through direct and indirect funding mechanisms has been debated. This study finds a clear bias toward local funding options, although the reason for this is unclear. This is an area that should be pursued in future studies.

It would be easy to accuse advocates of myopia, seeing only the possibility of government policy change, rather than working to change the practices of for-profit entities that benefit most from the current housing system. The regulation of banks through CRA legislation was a notable exception to advocates general focus on increased government funding. However, there are a number of reasons why advocates may pursue government policy change. One, government is a big, singular, stationary target, while the profiteers in housing are numerable, and not tied to geographic locations making them difficult to hold accountable. Two, government regulates business practice, so modifying government policy may be the best way to change business practice (while CRA legislation is an instance of this, it is notable that NPA began targetting banks first and then moved to government). Three, government can, and often does, use the police-legal apparatus to protect business interests from community-based action. This happened at the height of the rent strikes of the Great Depression, when jurisdictions passed laws to make it illegal to organize rent strikes. In fact, this was the precursor to the Communist Party's shift from landlord targeted to state targeted action. In this situation government provided legal support for landlord's goals of extracting maximum revenue from their tenants, regardless of social costs. Alternatively, the focus on government may not be

due to pragmatic reasoning, but instead show the taken for granted nature of neoliberal discourse: "businesses are simply catering to public demand" and therefore not indicted by the unequal distribution of shelter, despite the capital businesses accrue from these inequalities.

One of the limitations of this study is that it neglects the most successful, largest, most well coordinated, and wealthiest housing advocacy groups. The National Association of Realtors, the Mortgage Brokers Association, and theNational Home Builders Association have been effectively shaping policy and advancing their concerns on federal, state and local levels for over half a century (Dreier, 2006). The coalition of these groups has successfully protected one of the largest and most regressive tax expenditures in the federal government: the interest and property tax deduction for residential properties. This tax deduction has existed since the advent of the national income tax and has withstood strong mobilizations against it from both the left and right of the political spectrum.

Social Position and Advocacy Strategy Choice

Why do advocates' social positions influence the strategies they employ? Andrews and Edwards' (2004) suggested five areas of success in advocacy may offer some insight. Those advocates on the margins of housing policy are most interested in *agenda setting,* while those occupying more centralized positions are more concerned with *monitoring and shaping implementation.* Participants' differing goals could explain why they discuss different processes. However, this then begs the question: why would different groups have different goals when working on the same issue? An immediate

answer comes to mind: those who are more embedded in the system of housing

production deal everyday with issues of implementation while those on the margins are

primarily aware of general attitudes rather than implementation specifics. One's area of

most salient experience could determine which goals are chosen, and thereby explain

why different processes are promoted.

More critical explanations also exist. For instance, those more embedded in the

housing market have more to lose in confrontation with the housing production and

regulation system. Public confrontation could put the actor's funding, job, or

relationships at risk. Therefore, more polite methods are preferred and decision makers

are addressed privately rather than via the public sphere. Those on the margins may be

acutely, if implicitly, aware that when public decision making occurs in private, it is

likely that those with the least power to reward or punish officials will be shown the least

regard. Further, it may be less a "preference" for raising awareness of the public, rather

those on the margins may have no other choice. With markers of class, race and gender

facilitating and limiting access to decision-makers and powerful bodies, recourse to the

general public may be the only option for those on the margins. Similarly, with limited

power to punish or reward, raising awareness is the only viable strategy for those without

power. Bourdieu's (1998) notion of habitus may provide an alternative explanation. The

concept of habitus describes how preferences and actions differ for actors according to

their social field. Bourdieu's theory purports that those with different social positions

will respond differently to similar circumstances, as seen in the results of this study.

Democracy and its Discontents

Two important findings about the democratic process came to the surface in this study. One, some interviewees had clearly lost faith in the likelihood that public reason was a mechanism to bring about progressive housing policy. Two, there was lack of focus on the process of bringing people into the group who were most affected by housing shortages. The loss of faith in democratic agency was related to increased discussion of internal organizing practices and a focus on the utilization of non-public methods of advocacy. What happens to the democratic policy process when even progressive social advocates resort to backdoor methods of policy change? How likely is it that significant success can be attained through indulging in mechanisms that those with the most ability to reward and punish public officials also utilize? Unfortunately, however, there may be little choice for those who want progressive policy change. In Nashville, a popular anti-tax/small government sentiment makes it difficult to gain widespread support for increasing government intervention into housing. Coinciding with concerns about the populace, some advocates show similar scorn for the majority of local municipal representatives, who share their constituents' lack of regard for even well considered government intervention. Other interviewees were concerned about local politicians' conflict of interest, such as real estate connections that could be harmed by progressive housing policy changes. Further, those advocates involved in implementing policy have disdain for public discourse, which is often perceived as ill-informed. These policy implementers field attacks from all sides: for excesses from the political right, and deficits from the political left. Whether based on prejudice or realism, some advocates

have strong doubts about whether "rule by the people" will lead to progressive housing policies.

Yates (2006) writes: "… *housing policy efforts must be much more based in grassroots resident organizations, especially in communities of color."* (p. 234, italics in original). Given this imperative, the present lack of focus on building grassroots involvement in the HTF effort is notable. While some of the advocates interviewed were homeless and formerly homeless members of a homeless activist group, these are the only group members substantially affected by Nashville's housing shortage. Advocates did not highlight the importance of having more people at the table with a direct personal stake in policy outcomes (non-profit executives had a stake in getting more resources for their housing non-profit, but this is slightly different). While this lack of grassroots focus may be surprising given that affected individuals may have a lot to offer a group that is working for their concerns. However, this follows historical trend of predominantly middle class and professional housing advocacy. This trend, however, runs against Yates's (2006) argument that effective policy change has to be self-defense based, organized by those who need it most. There is a further implication here: if the findings from this study reflect larger patterns, grassroots efforts would focus more on raising public awareness and less on privately negotiating with decision makers.

Consequences of Findings

While there may be many pragmatic reasons for an almost exclusive focus on local-level government interventions, there is a risk that these efforts are more distractions than substantive interventions. Local efforts should spend time

understanding initiatives at the federal level and support increasingly progressive policies nationally. Similarly, support for local involvement in federal policy has to come from organizations like the National Low-Income Housing Coalition and other groups that need to find ways to go beyond non-profit and activist membership and find ways to engage larger grassroots participation.

Advocacy groups with heterogeneous memberships will need to come to terms with the likelihood that social position is a factor in members' promotion of particular strategies. Given this realization, groups will need to choose the most viable strategy, which seems to be at least as much determined by participant background as by rational engagement with the "facts". Differences of opinion can provide a wide range of options for groups to consider when selecting strategies and prevent "groupthink". On the other hand, too much diversity may result in organizational indecision and reduced political activity. There is some evidence that the latter is occurring in the housing trust fund group.

Problems

This paper highlights the role of agentic individuals and groups in the development of a more progressive housing policy during the middle of the century. The paper then asserts the role of the political economic structure in causing the changes in housing policy after 1970. While evidence is marshaled to support both these assertions, it could also be argued that the achievements of pre-1970 were as reliant on the political economic structure as the present era. In fact, Painter (2002) argues that public housing was a paradigmatic case of Fordist relations: "public housing is a preeminent example of

…. [t]he social wage … central to the Fordist mode of regulation" (p.99). This problematizes the agentic assumptions of most of the advocacy literature. A further blow to the notion of agency in political processes is this study's findings about the role of social position in determining advocacy strategies. Democratic discourse assumes the existence of rational democratic agents who can influence how the state is governed (see Young, 2000). The findings of this study problematize this assumption. However, post-modern and post-structural theorists have long problematized the notions of rationality, democracy, and agency. These writers condemn rationality, democracy, and agency as relics of Enlightenment idealism. However, these assumptions seem to be crucial in our civic relations. A post-rational, post-democratic, and post-agentic citizenry is difficult to imagine, and one that does not intuitively offer more economic and social equality than currently experienced in the contemporary post-Fordist state with its (perhaps fallacious) rational, democratic, and agentic assumptions.

This study provides evidence that social position and belief in democratic agency are powerful determinants in preferences for particular political strategies. This is an area that requires further exploration, as it informs advocacy practice, democratic theory, and the role of structure and agency in individual action.

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